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Paul McKenna

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Welcome To My Weekly



Our fabulous agony aunt, Helen Lederer, is a woman of many talents – comedian, actress, counsellor, game show contestant and now author. Her hilarious yet poignant first novel, *Losing It*, is published this week and to celebrate she's written an exclusive Valentine's Day short story for My Weekly. We also bring you news of Oxfam's wonderful Strength to Survive appeal, designed to help people facing disaster build better defences for the future. Join us to celebrate *EastEnders*' 30th anniversary (yes, 30!) and share some delicious breakfast recipes!

Sally

Sally Hampton, Editor

It's A Great Week To...

Put On Your Dancing Shoes! Celebrate Mardi Gras around the world

PAGE 38



Look Great For Less! Top-to-toe looks for £70 or under

PAGE 14





Have A Health MOT! Dr Sarah Jarvis tells you how

PAGE 52



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COVER: MAIN – CAMERA PRESS/NICK WILSON; INSET – BBC PICTURES

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ALL ABOUT YOU!

The place to share your news, views, thoughts and dreams… and especially the photos that make you smile

Holiday Fun!

The children from the Don Bosco Farm High School in Goa, India are very happy to receive these hand puppets knitted by the residents of Kingsbury Court Lodge Sheltered Housing in Bolton, who have sent over 300 teddies and hand puppets. It's lovely to see the smiling faces of the children. Thank you to all the ladies. Anne-Marie Martin, Bolton

Past Pics

My dad was in the Royal Engineers and when stationed away would send love letters and gifts to mum. They were married in 1952 with dad wearing his uniform and mum looking extremely happy and proud.
Tracy King, West Sussex



My Passion…

My passion is keeping dogs. I love them so much and have three of my own. When I saw this wolf at a local zoo he looked so dog-like I wanted to take him home!
Hannah Roberts, Teignmouth



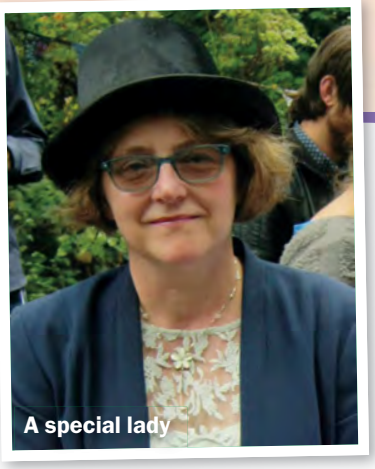
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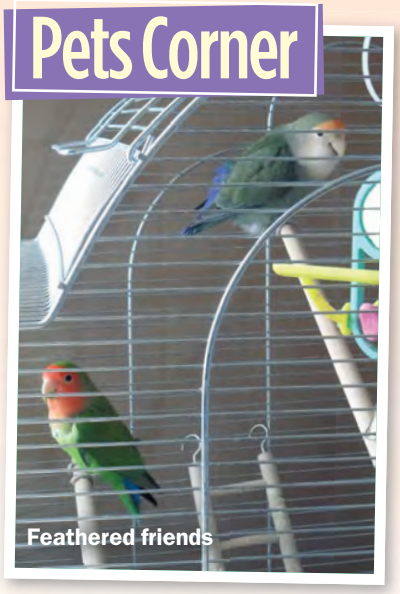
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Gillian Boot, my sister, constantly helps everyone around her. She has a disabled daughter whom she's supported through university. She supports refugees including Lysette from Rwanda, who now lives in Britain, and feeds anyone who looks in need of a meal. She works in a school for children with complex needs and is at the heart of her community. Mica May, Todmorden



A special lady

Pets Corner



Feathered friends

Here are our two lovely colourful love birds Jack and Jill.
Tracey Griffin, Bristol

Each week we'll print some of the comments you've sent or posted. Keep up with the latest news at My Weekly on

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STAR LETTER



I loved seeing the beautiful pictures of the cascade of ceramic poppies around the Tower of London (My Weekly No5248). I had great pleasure in helping to knit some of the poppies which were made into a plaque of the unknown soldier, on display next month at the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas.

Judith Davies-Ratcliffe, Birmingham



My son Max is in his third year at uni. During the holidays he went to Marrakesh, Morocco, to help teach at schools in that area. Here he is with some of the brilliant children he met. Although they had very little, they were always happy.

Jeena Cooper, Newcastle

FROM OUR INBOX THIS WEEK

Snippets from readers' emails, Facebook and Twitter



◆ **"I loved reading about *Last Tango in Halifax* (No5255). Celia and Alan are the Deirdre and Ken of Yorkshire and the programme has brightened up the winter evenings. You always get a warm glow after watching their antics." *C Bartram***

◆ **"What a heart-warming story about Kathryn and her struggle with Idiopathic Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension (No5255). I am so glad she was given the opportunity to have a transplant which transformed her life and those of her family and friends. I believe we should all 'opt in' to have our organs transplanted – in fact it should be taken for granted and those who do not want to do this could simply go to their doctor and 'opt out'." *Mary***

PICTURE: BBC PICTURES

Little Treasures



I have always loved books. Now I'm retired, it is really lovely to snuggle up with my youngest granddaughter whilst we read her storybooks together. What wonderful adventures we have!

Denise Oanes, Southend-on-Sea



My beautiful daughter Emily (8) and handsome son Jack (11) were page boy and bridesmaid at my wedding on a beautiful day in August in Devon.

Laura Cooper, Devon

Rant



Don't be a litter lout

I get annoyed when people who buy newspapers and mags rifle through them and discard the loose circulars. Why don't they take them home for recycling, instead of expecting others to pick up after them?

Iris Jones, Weston-super-Mare

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From Heartache To Happiness

He's in love and busier than ever helping people – life is good for Paul McKenna



After years of helping us lose weight, stop smoking, become more confident and be happier, bestselling motivational author Paul McKenna has finally followed his own advice and changed his own life completely!

"Things are going well at the moment," says Paul, whose new book *The Three Things That Will Change Your Destiny Today!* promises to do just that. "I had a rough couple of years. My father, a couple of my friends and my dog died and everything began to get to me.

"I have problems and challenges like everyone else and there were times when I was really low. But now – life is rich and wonderful.

"My book is selling well, I have a new television chat show in the USA, business is booming, I'm about to launch my own self-improvement digital channel – Positivity.com – and although my mum had some health challenges, she's now in great shape.

"And mentally, physically and emotionally, all's going well for me," says Paul, who then lets slip the most important reason for his new found happiness – love!

"Kate is the girl of my dreams," he reveals. "We've known each other for over 20 years – in fact, Kate manages my company and has always been there for me, as a friend.

"I always liked Kate and found her very attractive but I didn't want to risk our working relationship," admits Paul. "My mum was forever telling me I should ask Kate out but, with my track record with relationships, I thought this would ultimately end in catastrophe so I kept my distance.

"Then we went out for a drink after work one night and I said to Kate, 'Tell me one thing about yourself that I don't know.' And Kate said, completely out of the blue, 'That I love you.'

"I immediately said, 'I love you, too'. However, Kate stressed that we couldn't do anything about this as we worked together but, in the end, neither of us could fight our feelings and that was it.

"Kate has given me such a sense of fulfilment and I have to admit that, after years of heartache, I finally have my love story. We're getting married later this year.

"Now I'm engaged, I might finally write the Paul McKenna relationship book my publisher has always begged me for!"

Paul explains that he aims to write one book a year and, although he now feels much more qualified to write a book to guide us through the minefields of relationships, he's currently focusing on his new book, which reveals three simple actions that can help someone take control of their destiny.

"I started researching as people kept asking me if there was any one thing that really makes a difference to your future," explains Paul.

"It turns out there isn't one thing you can do – but there are three simple things you can do that will alter the course of your destiny.



Helping break bad habits

"You can't control everything in life but you can control how you think, feel and respond. I began doing this system with people who were facing terrible challenges, including a man whose wife had just left him, another who was on the verge of bankruptcy and a woman with absolutely no confidence. Every one of them turned their life around in the space of a week. I started doing this system with groups of up to 500 people at a time and the feedback was incredible.

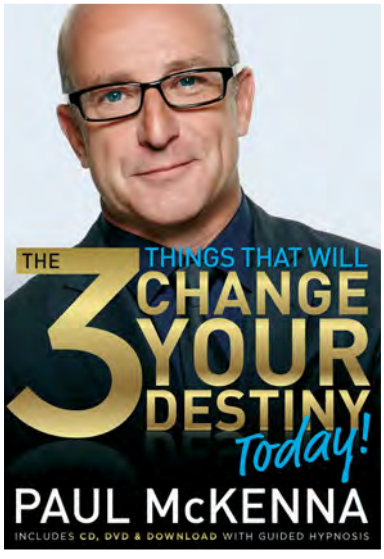
"*The Three Things That Will Change Your Destiny Today!* only took me a year to write but it's based on 30 years' experience of helping people. I've used the techniques in this book to get to the very good place I'm in now.

"I can finally say that I like myself and, although I always suspected that growing old would be something I liked, it's wonderful to discover I'm really enjoying it! And, having found the perfect person, life couldn't be more perfect."

"Now I'm engaged, I might finally write that relationship book!"

Paul's Destiny Changers

- **Clear up the past. "This is when 'havening' – a simple technique which uses stroking and eye movements to unblock emotions – is invaluable. Havening is by far the most powerful technique I've ever come across."**
- Be lucky. "Research has found that people who believe they are lucky actually are luckier than the rest of us. My new system includes a technique which instils the sub-conscious belief that you're lucky."
- **Be proactive about the future. "Decide what you want from life. I want fun, health and time with my family and I now aim to do something that helps me achieve all this every day."**



***The Three Things That Will Change Your Destiny Today!* by Paul McKenna PhD is available from all good bookshops RRP £12.99 and is published by Bantam Press. For more information, visit paulmckenna.com.**

WORDS: WENDY GLASS PICTURES: REX FEATURES

Getting To Know...

Damian Lewis

The *Wolf Hall* star explains his fascination with the real King Henry – and his own homeland…

◆ **I think we all have this understanding that Henry VIII was this womanising, syphilitic, bloated, genocidal Elvis character.** And actually the truth is, he had a 32-inch waist and remained that way for quite a long time. He was the pre-eminent sportsman in his court, much taller than anyone else and his beautiful, pale complexion was often remarked upon.

◆ **The more I read about Henry, the more I was happy – and alarmed – to find that I did share character traits with him.** I think there's no question it helps having had the kind of schooling that I've had (at Eton) to play a King. Just the way, the sort of court structure, hierarchies, the way they're set up, it's something I feel I implicitly understand.

◆ **Anne Boleyn was a formidable woman and she had an extraordinary power over Henry.** He desired her and he wanted her. I think he also was struck by her undoubted intelligence and her strength of will. I hadn't realised to what extent Anne Boleyn is something of a feminist icon – that's something I have learned while filming *Wolf Hall*.



With Claire Foy in *Wolf Hall*...

Did You Know?

Montacute House in Somerset, which appears as Greenwich Palace in *Wolf Hall*, was also a location for *Sense and Sensibility* and *The Libertine*.

From Home to Homeland

◆ **I think people watch *Homeland* for different reasons.** There's a compelling thriller at the centre of it, but I think people also got very engaged in the relationship at the centre of it between the CIA officer and this turned soldier. Set against a backdrop of a plot to blow up the United States, it was heady stuff.

◆ **I feel very proprietorial about London.** It's my town and always has been. I've resolved to use public transport. I simply refuse not to use the Tube because I might get bothered by people. It's slightly mad to walk through the West End during peak tourist season – the Italians and Spanish can be quite persistent!

◆ **I've supported Liverpool Football Club since I was seven.** I was so excited when I struck up an email correspondence with Kenny Dalglish through my work with the charity Soccer Aid.



... and with Claire Danes in *Homeland*



English... or American?

Since playing Richard Winters in *Band of Brothers*, Damian's used an American accent in many roles. It was so convincing in *Homeland*, many of the crew didn't believe he was English!

On his OBE

"When I heard I was being awarded it, it was a bit like 'now you've got to prove it'. It was a bit like being asked to be a prefect."

PICTURES: BBC PICTURES, REX FEATURES

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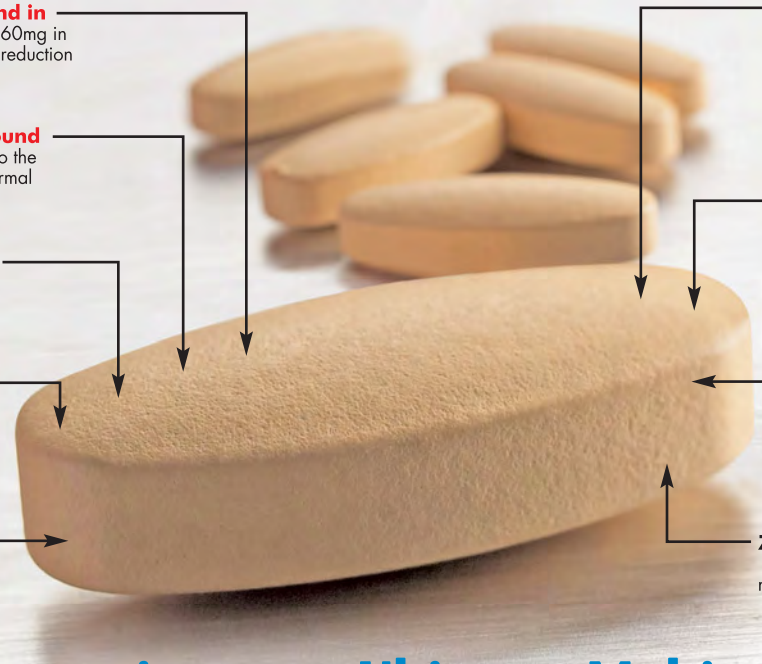
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Secret Admirer Helen

Shirley was determined to fill that Valentine void – for herself and her daughter, too



Shirley Deering was just dashing out of the front door, when she remembered the cards. Two rather garishly coloured envelopes were propped against a plant on the hall table.

Perhaps I should send myself some flowers tomorrow, thought Shirley as she snatched the envelopes and hurried out into the rain. *Nothing worse than waking up to a house empty of flowers on Valentine's Day.*

Or perhaps she should just buy herself a small bunch of primroses and put them by her bed this evening? She would then wake up to a celebration of yellow and could pretend just for a moment that someone had placed them there as a token of their deepest love, before they both scurried off to work.

Shirley had just watched a strand on breakfast television, designed to promote happy endorphins in the over-fifties. Surrounding oneself with flowers on high days and holidays was one recommendation. Certain occasions could apparently trigger a sense of loneliness and isolation – and Valentine's Day was mentioned as one of these.

It wasn't just Shirley who needed to be cheered – there was her daughter, Mandy, to consider. It was for this reason there had been two cards on the table. Shirley had bought one for Mandy and gone to some lengths to forge what she thought might be a male-looking signature.

Today's challenge was to find someone who could post the card in a different postcode, to avoid suspicion, so that it would arrive at Mandy's university tomorrow.

As far as Shirley knew, there was no boyfriend on the scene, as yet, and she needed her daughter to feel loved and special on Valentine's Day – especially as she was so far away.

She shut the gate behind her and wrangled her umbrella into life, before running for the bus, late as usual. She felt she resembled a drowned rat instead of the smart recruitment officer she was supposed to be.

The chances of promoting any happy endorphins for herself, let alone her daughter, seemed as remote as getting to work on time.

The bus was unusually packed with people. There must be a problem, or maybe it was just the rain that held everything up. Shirley just about managed to squeeze herself onto the bus before the doors closed, but was nowhere near a rail to hang onto for stability. She just hoped she could remain upright and dry off a bit before she got to St Pauls.

ILLUSTRATIONS: THINKSTOCK, MANDY DIXON AUTHOR PICTURE: MATT CROCKETT

Lederer





Predictably enough, the bus made an emergency stop within minutes of her getting on and she found herself chin to chest with a man and his briefcase. She was vaguely aware of a trilby hat – which seemed suitable attire given the weather – but she couldn't see a face.

"So sorry," said Shirley, embarrassed and flustered. She was sure she had left some wet marks on the person's coat, as well as yelping rather loudly. This was regretful but unavoidable. Someone had trodden on her toe as she fell.

"Not at all," the man replied gallantly and moved backwards to allow her more room. Unfortunately the move proved over-ambitious, given the consistent lurching of the bus.

Shirley watched with horror as the man toppled backwards on to a mother with a young child, who let out an indignant howl at being squashed so rudely. His trilby fell off onto the muddy floor of the bus.

It was now the man's turn to apologise as he retrieved his hat. Shirley was able to see curly brown hair at the nape of his neck. It looked remarkably like that of a man she had rather wanted to dance with at the Christmas party. But it couldn't be. Surely.

The mother shushed the child and glared at him.

"We must stop meeting like this," said the man, once he had righted himself and the child had been given a sweet.

Shirley looked around, and realised he was directing his comment at her. He was smiling. He had warm blue eyes.

She smoothed her long, upstyled silver hair automatically and hoped her lipstick was still intact. She knew she didn't look too bad for her age. Just rather wet.

Normally she would have dismissed his remark as being rather corny. "We must stop meeting like this" was such a cliché after all. Still, his smile was very appealing. He was now seeming very familiar, but she peered up at him more closely, to be sure.

"We're both on the fifth floor," he offered by way of explanation with a slight tilt of his head.

"Strictly speaking, we're both on the 138 bus, going to St Pauls. I hope."

"And if we're not being strict…" He twinkled at her. "I'd have to say that I've seen you in the lift."

She raised one eyebrow. The hat didn't do him any favours. Mind you, she wasn't at her best either.

"And in the canteen – you like salads, I think? – and at the Christmas party,

Continued overleaf



Continued from previous page

when you lost your handbag?"

Yes, it was now confirmed, thought Shirley. This was Graham Samuels. Director of Finance at her insurance office. Everyone liked him enormously but she had not been sure how to talk to him, since he'd been widowed a few years ago. What was he doing on her bus?

Of course she remembered him at the office Christmas party. He had been very helpful about her lost bag, but had then spent the evening dancing with a secretary which had piqued her. She could remember it clearly.

"My car's decided to give up on me and I've got to get to Brighton for a conference." He answered her unspoken question.

Shirley nodded. She had become aware of the way he was looking at her. Amused and yet interested. She wished she'd been wearing a nicer coat, or higher shoes. As it was, she felt rather short. Or maybe it was just that he was rather tall.

"But Brighton's not in the same direction as St Paul's," was all she could think of to say.

She tried to put the image of the secretary dancing with him out of her mind, but the woman had been rather showy, if memory served.

"I forgot some papers," he explained.

"Ah."

They both looked ahead. An idea was forming in Shirley's mind.

She was lonely. She too had been widowed many years ago, but had encouraged Mandy to be independent and take her chances when she was given a place at Aberdeen. Surely a card sent from Brighton – arriving in time for Valentine's Day at her university – would indeed be a great result. Mandy would have no idea who it was from, but at least she would think she had an admirer…

Once they were through the doors of the insurance office, Shirley plucked up courage. She turned to him.

"Um. I was wondering…"

"So was I," he said encouragingly.

"Oh…"

Shirley wasn't sure what to say next but luckily the lift arrived, which diverted them both.

"What?" Shirley snatched the card back, mortified

"You first," he said.

"Well, I was wondering if…" Shirley said as she rummaged in her bag. Two people who were already in the lift looked on with interest.

"If you could post this to my daughter from Brighton? It's a Valentine's card."

Graham took the envelope and looked at the address. Then he looked at Shirley.

"But it's addressed to you."

"What?" Shirley snatched it back, mortified. "I meant this one."

She handed him the other card. Graham nodded.

"I'd be delighted."

The other lift users nodded their approval at this transaction. Shirley was relieved when she reached her floor to get out. She felt herself blushing furiously.

The next morning, on Valentine's Day, Shirley woke up with a feeling of mild anticipation. There were no flowers by her bed, but at least there would be one card waiting for her on the mat – even if she had sent it to herself.

Wait. There on the mat were two cards.

She opened a small, neat, white envelope. The card was very plain and had male-looking handwriting inside.

I have now admired you in the lift, the canteen, at the Christmas party and more recently on the 138 bus. Meet me tonight so I can admire you more?

Underneath a squiggle of a signature was the name of a restaurant and a time to meet.

Just as Shirley was leaving the house she received a phone call.

"Guess what, Mum?" Mandy's voice was high with excitement.

"What, darling?" Shirley adjusted her necklace. She wanted to look her best.

"I got this weird Valentine's card in the post this morning. From Brighton! But it can't have been from my boyfriend, because he's in my hall of residence up here!"

"Your boyfriend?" asked Shirley, removing the necklace with her free hand. She didn't want to appear too showy on a first date.

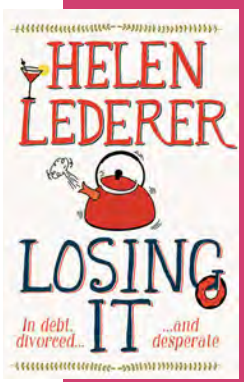
"Yes. Didn't I say? So I've got two cards this year!"

"Snap," said Shirley, smiling at her reflection. Mandy was too excited to notice this news from her mother.

"Maybe I shouldn't mention the other one, though?" Mandy asked. "What do you think, Mum?"

"Oh, I don't think it will do any harm," said Shirley happily. "Two cards are better than none."

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THE AUTHOR SAYS…

"I love Valentine's Day! As a teenager, I would always look forward to a card. If I ever received one I would be over the moon, but this was rare, sadly. And when my daughter was away at university, I began to send her cards as well!"

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WORDS: AUDREY PATTERSON

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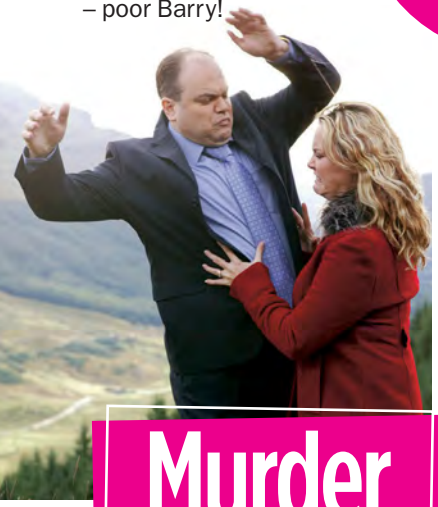
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HAPPY 30th EastEnders

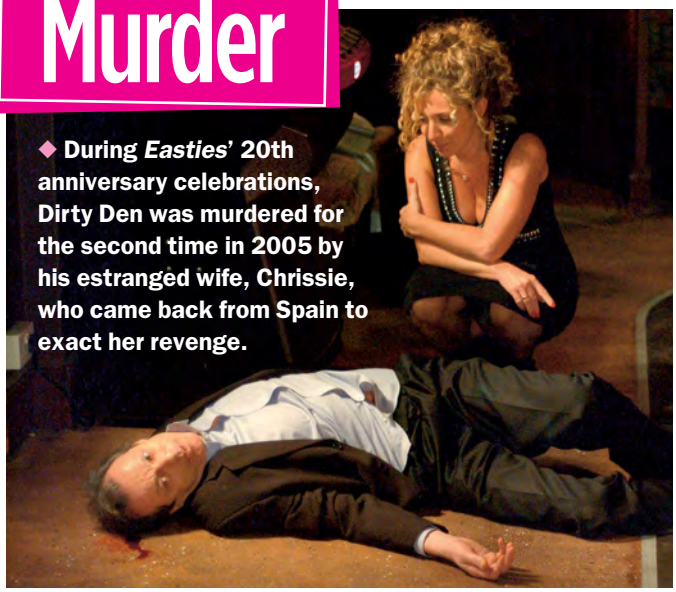
BBC

Look back over three decades of family fights, human drama and tea in the caff…

◆ New Year's Day in 2004 saw evil Janine push gullible Barry to his death over some cliffs – poor Barry!



Murder



◆ **During *Easties'* 20th anniversary celebrations, Dirty Den was murdered for the second time in 2005 by his estranged wife, Chrissie, who came back from Spain to exact her revenge.**



◆ **Xmas 2009 saw vindictive Archie Mitchell murdered, leading us into a massive Whodunnit? storyline for the 25th anniversary celebrations. Stacey was revealed as the murderer in Feb 2010.**

Death



◆ **Tears were shed in the new Millennium as the soap tackled a cutting-edge topic when Dot helped her dear friend, Ethel, die, giving her a lethal overdose.**

◆ Fans of Tiff were left distraught when she chased after Grant and her daughter on a snowy December night in 2008 – only to be killed by an oncoming car.



◆ *EastEnders* bravely and delicately explored the topic of HIV and AIDS and we eventually saw Mark Fowler succumb to the disease in April 2004.



WORDS: ALISON GRAVES PICTURES: BBC PICTURES



◆ **As part of the big 30th, we find out next week who killed Lucy Beale! Everyone's under suspicion, and get set for a flashback episode – a first for the soap – when we'll see Lucy back on our screens. We'll see the killer in the action – and how Lucy met her fate!**

Affairs



◆ Oh, we felt for Carol in 1999 when she walked in on daughter Bianca with her man, Dan – eek!

◆ **Xmas never runs smoothly. In 2007 Stacey and Max's affair was revealed – in front of the whole Branning family!**



◆ **1994 saw the storyline dubbed "Sharongate". Gaining 25.3 million viewers, Sharon's affair with Phil was busted when her admission was secretly recorded and sent to Grant. He played it out loud at The Vic… then beat Phil to a pulp!**



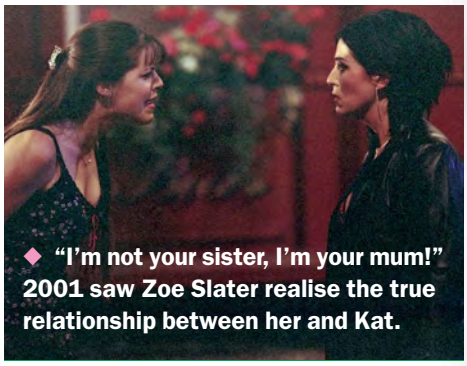
Drama



◆ **An unforgettable Xmas from 1986 – Den served Angie her divorce papers. Watched by 30.1 million, it goes down in history as the most watched episode!**



◆ The 80s wasn't a happy time, as '86 also saw Arthur Fowler suffer his almighty Christmas breakdown.



◆ **"I'm not your sister, I'm your mum!" 2001 saw Zoe Slater realise the true relationship between her and Kat.**



◆ Wild Kat and soft Alfie wed for the first time in 2007. Their lives never ran smoothly with affairs, explosions, money trouble, babies and a second marriage thrown in!



◆ **The Mitchells' Thames crash in 2008 was a thriller! Grant admitted to sleeping with Phil's wife, Kathy; Phil shot the car wheel sending them veering into icy water.**

From The Beginning



The only cast members to stay with the soap from the first episode on February 19, 1985, are Dot Cotton (June Brown) and Ian Beale (Adam Woodyatt). Dot, infamous for her chain-smoking and work in the launderette has had her share of drama with her son Nasty Nick. Ian, the Square's pushover, is dealing with the aftermath of his daughter's murder.



Who do *YOU* think killed Lucy Beale?!

Ben Hardy (Peter Beale):



"I'm constantly changing my mind on this one. I'm going to say that I think it's Abi. She has the motive and she's clearly hiding something. So Abi. I'd be very shocked if it was Peter!"

Harry Reid (Ben Mitchell):



"I think it's either Jane or Peter. They both have motives but Jane's sketchiness is more obvious than everyone else's. My wildcards are Cindy or Bobby with Jane covering for them – which is another possibility."

Lorna Fitzgerald (Abi Branning):



"I've always said Ian because I think it's the biggest shock and would make a great story. He's been in it the longest, it's his daughter… It really would be such a shock though, but it's a winner to me."

Jake Wood (Max Branning):



"I have no idea. I've had a few theories over the time. At one point I thought it was Abi and then I thought it was Ian and now I have no idea. It could be Max – there are definitely certain points over the last six months where it seems the finger of suspicion was pointed towards him."

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A Athena **B** Aphrodite **C** Hestia

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Just answer the following question:

Who asks the questions on quiz show *Pointless?*

A Alexandra Burke
B Alexander Armstrong
C Alexander the Great

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PICTURES: GETTY IMAGES, ALAMY

OXFAM

Strength To

Whenever there is a disaster, Oxfam will be there to provide vital support, and you can help by donating to a new appeal



After seeing scenes of disaster on the news do you wonder what happened afterwards? This spring My Weekly will bring you news of Oxfam's *Strength To Survive* campaign that aims to help people cope when disaster happens. I'm sure you'll find the stories inspiring – and don't forget for every pound you donate, the government's Aid Match scheme will match it, allowing Oxfam to make double the difference.

Sally

Clean running water and shelter are two of our most basic human needs – yet for every one of us who is in the lucky position to take them for granted, there are many others who sadly cannot. This year alone, millions of families worldwide will face heartbreak as their lives are torn apart by war, famine and natural disasters.

In the face of such adversity, situations can often seem hopeless but Oxfam has proved time and time again that this is simply not the case.



Helping to rebuild communities

On average, Oxfam is responding to more than 20 emergencies at one time – right now they are providing vital aid and resources to everyone from refugees in Jordan and Lebanon affected by the Syrian crisis to the communities affected by the Ebola health crisis in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

However, the far-reaching extent of their work means they urgently need your help.

Through their *Strength to Survive* Appeal, Oxfam hope to raise £2million to give people the vital resources they need to help them come back stronger following a disaster.

The money you donate will help Oxfam respond to people facing crisis right now.

♦ With Oxfam's *Strength To Survive* Appeal, you can be the difference between life and death when disaster hits. You can help people to prepare for the worst, and to pick up the pieces when the danger has passed. Donate today and every pound you give will be matched by the UK Government to make double the difference. Text APPEAL to 70066 to give £5. Texts cost £5 plus standard network rate. By texting you consent to future telephone contact from Oxfam. Text NOINFO to 70066 to stop future SMS. Visit **www.oxfam.org.uk/appeal**

Matching your donations with UKaid

"It was utterly heartbreaking"

We may be more used to seeing her dressed in her finery on screen as Lady Mary but last year, actress Michelle Dockery left *Downton Abbey* to travel to Jordan in her capacity as Oxfam's first ever Humanitarian Ambassador. During her trip she met people affected by the conflict in Syria at the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan – now a vast tented city, home to more than 20,000 displaced Syrians, half of them under 18.

"Meeting families who had been torn apart by conflict, stripped of everything they know – just trying to get by each day with the very basics they need to survive – was utterly heartbreaking." says Michelle. "Many of the women I talked to came from wonderful and full lives back in Syria.

"Now they have nothing and they need help to be able to survive day by day.

"Thanks to Oxfam and the incredible support of the British public, they're not alone. I witnessed firsthand the incredible work Oxfam do every day ensuring those people have the support they need to get back on their feet.

"Oxfam won't stop until the last person has access to the basics needed to survive an emergency. They cannot do that without the support and generosity of the British public. That's why the *Strength to Survive* Appeal is so important."



Oxfam ambassador Michelle Dockery

Survive



Providing clean water is vital

The money you donate will help Oxfam respond to crisis right now

FACT
Last year, Oxfam helped more than 6.1 million people in 24 different humanitarian emergencies, including Liberia, South Sudan and Darfur

"Human resilience is incredible"



Jane has worked for Oxfam all over the world

Jane Cocking is the Humanitarian Director of Oxfam and has helped Oxfam deliver responses to many humanitarian crises throughout her 17 years with the organisation and is delighted at the progress that has been made in recent years.

"In 2004, working in Darfur, it stretched us to respond to the needs of half a million people. We now respond to the needs of between five and a half and seven million people a year."

Jane attributes this to the fact they now seek to work in partnership with more local organisations, offering both practical and financial support, rather than to start projects from scratch.

"Just a couple of weeks ago I was in Liberia and I met Rosemary, who is keeping her health centre running through the whole Ebola crisis, helping hundreds of people from her local neighbourhood get treatment. Oxfam were able to offer her support." Jane may be used to working with people in crisis, yet she never fails to be moved by their strength of spirit.

"It is phenomenal. Situations you think would break any one of us… yet the resilience of the human spirit is incredible. You think *How on earth could a person deal with that?* and yet they just do. It's remarkable."

WORDS: SUSAN ANDERSON PICTURES: ABBIE TRAYLER/SMITH/OXFAM. CAROLINE GLUCK/OXFAM, TIMOTHY ALLEN/OXFAM

Chris Pascoe's Fun Tales

RAT TRAP!



The gloves are on as Chris faces an old enemy… and a deceased fish

At a time when I'm usually winding down work-wise, what with Christmas and New Year behind us and our catsitting quiet period upon us, I was forced to not only face my two greatest adversaries in one week – the rat Dirty Harry and crafty chameleon Fernando – I was also asked to pet-sit for a dead fish.

You may remember I looked after Dirty Harry a few months ago, assured by his owners that rats are one of the most misunderstood creatures on the planet and their Harry wouldn't hurt a fly.

This was true; I didn't once see Harry hurt a fly, but he did tear my hands to pieces so comprehensively that I ended the week on first name terms with the local pharmacist, who jovially remarked that he couldn't recall ever seeing so many sticky plasters on one person.

So visiting them both, one after the other, for a whole week, wasn't my idea of fun.

Dirty Harry's owners bade me a happy telephone farewell, telling me that I was still the only person he'd ever felt moved to attack and that they expected things would go much better this time round. I agreed that I was sure they would, eyeing the as yet unopened industrial strength gardening gloves I'd just purchased.

Dirty Harry was pleased to see me again, but not so pleased to see the gloves. He was quite magnanimous in defeat, I thought, sensing that he'd taught me a few harsh lessons on our last meeting.



Harry was magnanimous in his defeat, or so I thought…

That was how I saw things, anyway – my friend Mr Patel the chemist commented two days later that he'd rarely seen a worse bite wound to the nose and suggested a cold compress gel and a Comic Relief nose to hide it.

And then there was the fish named Bob. Upon visiting my new customer's house to complete a checklist for forthcoming cat-sitting visits, and having met the two happy and welcoming in-house felines, I was led to a room containing a small child named Edward and a fish tank.

"Can you also keep an eye on Bob?" requested Edward's father Steve. "Just a small pinch of food every other day should be fine."

I stared into the tank at a fish that had clearly been dead for quite some time.

"Um… I think I should mention…" I started.

"Don't worry if you forget, there's enough pond weed in there really, but great if you could," continued Steve.

I stared at the motionless fish floating upside down in the middle of the tank. I felt as if I was in some kind of *Monty Python* sketch, and that my next line should be something like "You realise this is an ex-fish, don't you?"

But this was not the sort of thing to say in front of a seven-year-old, so I nodded helplessly.

As we left the room, Steve pulled me to one side. "Don't worry about feeding the fish – it's dead. We'll tell him after the holiday."

So quite a week. And I'll probably end it as the subject of a seven-year-old's vendetta for killing his goldfish. This is the lot of the winding-down pet sitter. I can't wait for Spring.

Chris Pascoe is the author of *A Cat Called Birmingham* and *You Can Take the Cat Out of Slough*, and of Your Cat magazine's column Confessions of a Cat Sitter.

ILLUSTRATION: MANDY DIXON, THINKSTOCK

NEXT WEEK

Chris encounters a cat with a resemblance to the mayor of London!

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No 1 for FICTION

Janey Fraser

A Family Affair

Concluding Our Compelling Serial: As Bridie and Mark grow ever closer, they realise the path to happiness is a rocky one

Australia? How on earth could Bridie have a relationship with Mark if it meant her daughter living on the other side of the world?

"She doesn't mean it," Mark tried to reassure her when they managed to meet up the following weekend in an out-of-town café.

"That's just the thing!" Bridie touched his outstretched hand briefly. "Katie's already emailed her dad to see if she can live with him." Her throat thickened. "I'm so sorry. But if I have to choose between you and my children…"

Mark broke in. "Then you must chose them." His eyes met hers, sadly. "I do understand, Bridie. I really do."

They said goodbye in the car park, agreeing to stay friends, but Bridie had to stop twice on the way home to dry her tears. When she got back, Katie was stomping around.

"Everything all right?"

"No." Katie's angry face met hers. "Dad doesn't want me. Look."

Bridie glanced at the computer screen. "Great idea in theory but impractical! We're often away on business and besides, it would mean changing schools."

Relief followed by pity flashed through Bridie's chest. "I'm sorry."

Her daughter's face was buried in her shoulder now. "I don't like the selfish person I've become, Mum. Mel's right. You need some happiness of your own."

Why were teenagers so unreasonable one moment and reasonable the next? At the same time, her heart bled for her daughter. Nevertheless, Johnnie's email had opened up a tiny window of light.

Bridie almost flew down the stairs to find her mobile and call Mark. They'd have to take things slowly, of course. And there wasn't any guarantee that both sets of children would approve… but if they did, there might just be a chance for them.

Was it possible that three months had passed already? When Bridie looked back, she could hardly take it all in. Mark's children had been "cool" (Lucy's words) when he'd asked their permission to take Katie's mum out to dinner. And little Robin and Chris had given their thumbs up when Mark suggested regular football practice in the park with Sam. The first time that she and Mark had walked down the high street hand in hand, most people had given them approving smiles. Only Pat, Mark's mother-in-law, was off-hand.

"She'll come round in time," Mark said as they enjoyed an evening stroll along the sea front, while Mel was looking after all five of them at home.

"In time?" Bridie repeated, watching a pair of seagulls chase each other along the beach. It was all very well going out with someone at her age, but she couldn't help think about the future.

"It wouldn't be fair on our children if we started something serious that didn't continue," said Mark as if reading her thoughts.

Every bone in her body began to tingle. So far, they'd been taking things very slowly; going no further than a passionate kiss and cuddle at the end of every meeting. Bridie sensed he wanted to go further – she certainly did. But when you'd been hurt as badly as she had, you didn't want to risk the same thing happening again. And besides, how could she ever replace a dead wife?

"Mel said we could stay out late," added Mark quietly. "There's a hotel in Dorset that I passed recently. It looked rather nice, and it's far enough away to be discreet. What do you think?"

Bridie took a deep breath. *You have to take risks, every now and then*, Mel had said. Was it time now – despite her earlier doubts?

"I'm not sure," she started to say. But the disappointment in Mark's face reflected the same feeling in her heart.

"Actually, I am," she whispered. "Let's ring Mel. Now."

After Johnnie had left, Bridie hadn't been able to imagine being intimate with anyone else again, but when she and Mark woke the next morning in the pretty room with rosebud curtains, it felt the most natural thing in the world.

"Live with me," whispered Mark in her ear. "It might seem sudden but neither of us are getting any younger. We could merge our families. The kids are good friends already. I know we could make it work."

Really? Bridie leaned her head against Mark's shoulder. Was it possible that, after everything that had happened, they might all find happiness again?

Everyone had had questions of course, but they were practical rather than emotional. Who would take them to school? What would they tell the teachers? And – most important – where would they live?

It made sense to choose Bridie's

Bridie had to stop twice on her way home to dry her tears



ILLUSTRATION: ANDRE LEONARD

larger house with its two extra bedrooms. But from the minute they moved in, Mark realised he would have to fit into a set of traditions that had already been established.

Bridie's children were allowed to eat supper in front of the television. "It's easier," she explained, "especially if I've got to finish off something in my studio."

But he and Daisy had always insisted on everyone sitting round the table together – at least at weekends, when he wasn't at work. It was surely important family time.

Conversely, Bridie had strict bedtimes for her three. "Children need sleep and Katie won't go up at the same time as the others because she's older."

Daisy had been strict too, but he'd become more flexible. Besides, he wanted to have time with the children after getting back from work.

That wasn't all. He and Bridie had very different ways of running a house. She tended to throw cutlery in the drawer in any old way – usually because she was keen to get back to her kiln. He followed Daisy's rules of stacking spoons carefully back to back.

They were the sort of silly basic rules that most young couples established right from the beginning. But he and Bridie had each had their own lives for many years. And it wasn't easy to join them together.

To make it worse, even Lucy and Katie – who had been good friends recently – had begun to argue too. Sharing a bedroom didn't help.

"Your mum said I could put my stuff in your wardrobe."

"She should have asked me first. Anyway, it's our house."

Oh dear…

"It's understandable," said his father-in-law when he confided in him. "Daisy's mother and I still disagree about some things after all these years. I feel you should be allowed to get on with your own life, but Pat finds it hard."

So did he! Despite Daisy's deathbed letter, Mark still felt guilty. Often, when he and Bridie were in the throes of passion, he found himself feeling as if he'd betrayed his dead wife. Her mother certainly made him feel that way.

Yet ironically, Lucy and Sam often spoke quite happily about their mum in a matter-of-fact manner. And Bridie – to her credit – encouraged them.

"Can you make chocolate cake like Mummy did?" Sam had asked the other day and Bridie had done so; using the recipe book they had kept with his wife's artistic handwriting down the side.

Maybe, Mark told himself, it would be all right. But then, a few weeks later after he'd just lost another no-dinner-in-front-of-the-TV argument, Katie had excitedly torn into the kitchen. "Dad's coming home. He's just emailed me."

What? Mark's heart sank. Yet Bridie didn't look surprised.

"You knew already," he whispered as they loaded the dishwasher together.

"I only found out today." Her face was flushed. "He's returning for three months on business and also because…"

She stopped.

His mouth was dry with apprehension. "Go on.''

"Because he doesn't like the fact that

Continued on page 29

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Continued from page 27

you're in 'his' house as he puts it, looking after his children."

"It's got nothing to do with him," he said, slamming down a mug crossly. It had, he noticed, got "Dad" written on the side in big blue writing. It wasn't one of his. Instead, it was a mug which Johnnie had left behind. Supposing Bridie and Johnnie got back together? After all, it was clear that she was still hurting after the marriage break.

"Try and see his point of view, Mark. You'd probably feel the same."

The worst thing was that she was probably right. If things had been good between them, they might have worked their way through it. But they argued fiercely that night in low hushed whispers, sharply aware that there was only a wall dividing them from the girls.

"I love your children, Mark, but you've changed since you moved in. You don't do things our way and the kids are picking up on it…"

"But you don't do things my way…"

"Daisy's way, you mean. You still feel guilty. And I feel bad about living with a man who's not my children's father."



"I love your children, but you've changed since you moved in"

"Fine." He sat bolt upright in bed, swinging his legs over the side. "Then I'll sleep on the sofa tonight."

"All right." Her voice was raw with pain but at the same time, hostile. "Just make sure that you get up before the children. I don't want them upset any more than they have been already. And I'm talking about all five of them, in case you think I'm only referring to my lot."

They'd make up tomorrow, Mark told himself as he tossed and turned downstairs in the sitting room, regretting his hasty words. But Bridie was so cool the following day that he followed suit.

"Shall I sleep on the sofa again?" he asked when the kids had gone.

She shrugged. "If you want."

If he hadn't rented out his old house, he'd take his two straight back! Of course, they could go to his in-laws but that would mean admitting to Pat that she'd been right. And a small part of him couldn't help hoping there might be some hope left.

"Why are you and Bridie angry with each other?" asked Sam when he came back from work and didn't bother going to find her in the studio.

"We're not."

"Yes you are. You don't laugh any more or hold hands." His little face crumpled. "I don't like it when people are upset. It reminds me of when Mummy was ill."

Mark bit his lip. "I'm sorry, sometimes adults argue just like children."

"Then can't you make up – just like you tell us to?"

If only it was so easy!

Then, the following Saturday, there was a loud ring on the door bell. Leaping up from the sofa – he'd overslept! – Mark was met by a good-looking blond, tanned man with cold piercing eyes.

"Is Katie ready?"

This had to be Johnnie. He could see the resemblance with his daughter. Awkwardly, Mark ran a hand through his own uncombed hair and wished he'd got dressed instead of wearing baggy jogging bottoms. "I'll just call Bridie."

But already, Johnnie was inside the door, taking in the crumpled duvet on the sofa. "I see," he said as a slow smile crept across his face.

But before he could say anything, Katie flew down the stairs in her hockey kit, followed by Bridie, looking lovely and fresh in a fluffy pink top.

"Dad! You're early."

"I thought I was doing the hockey run," Mark began.

But Katie, her hand already in her father's, glared at him. "You can take Lucy. But Dad and I are going together."

Bridie sighed as the door closed behind them. "I'm sorry but he is her father and…"

Hurt, Mark turned away.

"Only when it suits him, you mean."

"You're not arguing again, are you?" Lucy had crept down without either of them realising it. "Come on, Dad. I'm going to be late. And don't forget to bring that letter for our class outing. Everyone else has handed theirs in."

It wasn't the first thing he'd forgotten since he and Bridie had fallen out. His boss had had to remind him about several unanswered emails.

"We can't go on like this," Mark told himself. They'd just have to find somewhere else to live and start again.

No," Bridie said when Johnnie had suggested dinner the following week. "I'm happy to work together for the children's sake. But you left me for someone else."

"And now you've got someone."

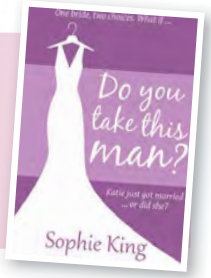
Had she? Mark was still sleeping on the sofa. Maybe Mel was right when she'd pointed out during one of their girly coffees, that they were both too proud to say sorry.

Something had to happen. Perhaps that was why Mark had proposed a "quiet talk" next Wednesday when the

Continued on page 31

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Continued from page 29

girls got back from their class outing. Maybe he was going to finally suggest moving out, and no wonder. She hadn't made it easy for him. It was almost, as Mel had said, as if she was trying to sabotage her own happiness in case she got hurt again. But surely things had gone too far now, to be put right again?

Mark was still in the office trying not to think of Bridie talking to Johnnie outside the house that morning when the phone went. He scarcely recognised the strangled voice.

"Something's happened."

He froze. "What?"

"It's, it's Katie." Bridie's words were a mumble. "She's gone missing and Johnnie's not answering his phone."

Missing? With this latest work deadline, he'd forgotten that today was the Dartmoor trip. Outside, rain was lashing against the windows.

His daughter? No. *No.* His throat began to tighten with panic.

Bridie, next to the teacher, began to cry. "One of the other girls said they'd had an argument. Katie stormed off and then Lucy followed. The emergency services have been called but they haven't arrived yet."

"Which way did they go?"

"Over there."

He needed no further telling.

"I'm coming with you."

"No," he started to say. But then stopped. Wouldn't Daisy have done just the same?

Arm in arm, they fought their way across the moor, buffeted by the wind.

An hour later, there was still no sign and the torches from their phones had begun to fade. "We've lost our girls," wept Bridie. "They're gone."

"No." Pulling her towards him, he hugged her tight. "We'll find them. I promise." Was he making a promise he might not be able to keep? *Help us, Daisy,* he prayed. *Please.*

His heart quickened. Lost on the moor? In weather like this?

Was she lost out on the moor? In weather like this?

"Where are you?"

"Tor Point."

He grabbed his coat. "I'm on my way."

There was already a group of worried parents huddled in the car park when he arrived. Miss Macdonald immediately ran up, breathless.

"I'm afraid Lucy's gone missing too."

"Listen! Did you hear music?"

Music? Surely not up here?

"It's just the wind…"

"No. It's Katie's ringtone. The one that Lucy helped her download."

Mark was already running, stumbling over boulders and falling over clumps of wild heather. In the distance, he could see a hut: the type that provided shelter for the walkers. And – yes – there were two small huddled figures on the ground. *Please may they be all right*, he found himself praying.

"Dad!"

Lucy was cradling Katie's head in her lap. Thank goodness! Both were awake and talking even though Katie's leg was clearly hurt.

"What took you so long, Mum?" Katie's voice might sound confident but he could tell she was shaky. "Lucy's been playing my ringtone over and over again to make me feel better because we couldn't get a signal."

"Why did you run off?" gasped Bridie, holding both girls.

Lucy looked abashed, in the torchlight. "We were arguing over you. I said Dad was right about bedtime."

"And I said Mum was," cut in Katie. She sighed. "I stormed off because I was angry with everyone – but then I fell down a really steep slope. I don't know what I'd have done if Lucy hadn't found me. And I'm really sorry I said all that horrid stuff."

Bridie and Mark looked at each other. It was all too easy to say things you didn't mean.

Just then, a helicopter whirred overhead and a spotlight shone down.

"We're safe now," Mark said, his arm around his three girls. "All of us."

That night, after Katie's ankle had been plastered, they went home.

"Did you hear what she said at the hospital?" piped up little Robin.

Now what? thought Bridie.

Katie shrugged. "The man thought Mark was my dad. So I told him that…"

"We were a bit of a mix," added Lucy, grinning.

"Are you two going to split up?" asked Chris, frowning.

"Why?" Bridie and Mark said together.

"Because you're not sleeping in the same room any more. Mum and Dad did that before they broke up."

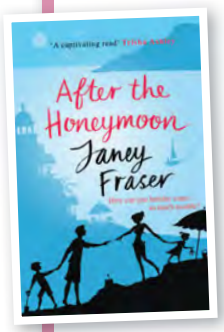
To her relief, Bridie felt Mark take her hand. "I love your mother."

"And I love you too!" she gulped.

"Ugh." Katie stood up. "If you two are going to get all lovely-dovey, we're off. Come on, Lucy. Let's watch TV. Your turn to choose the programme, although I'd like to see *X-Factor*."

They still needed to work out rules and compromises, Bridie told herself as she and Mark got the younger ones ready for bed. They'd already started to draw up a list. The children would need to do the same. But then again, wasn't that what a modern family was all about? If you really loved each other, the prize was worth it.

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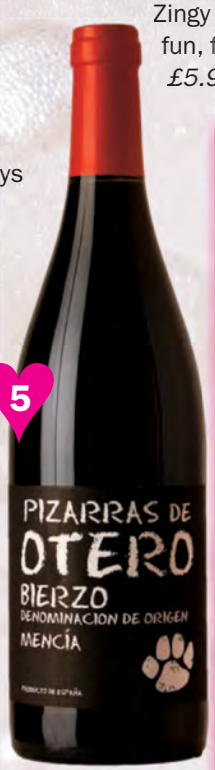
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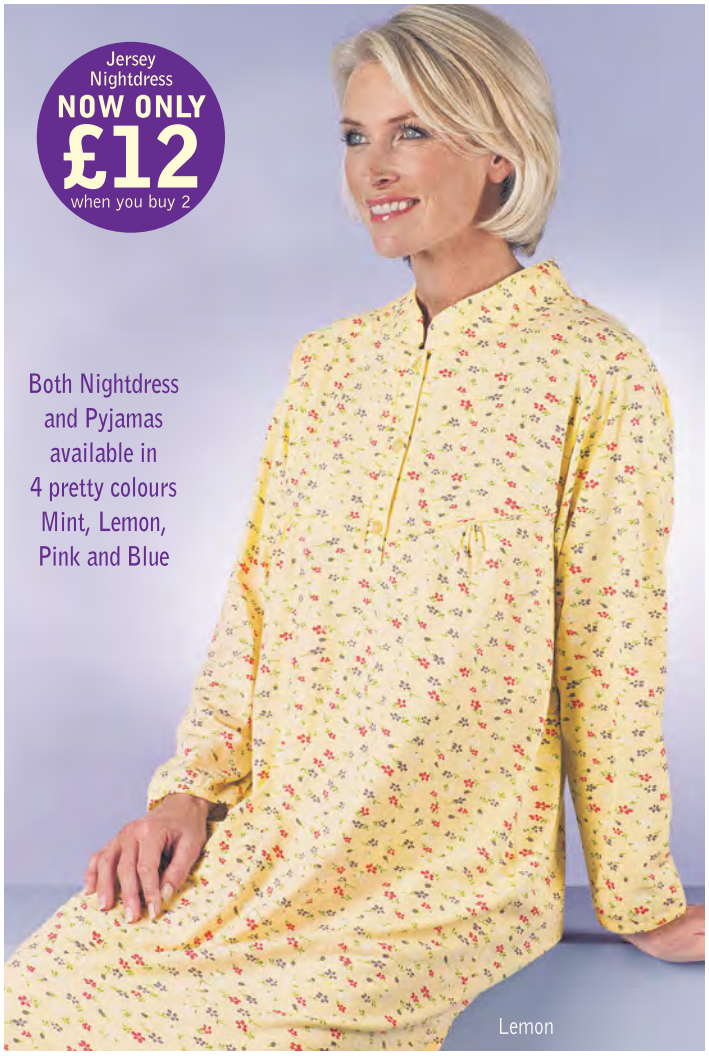
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- **1tbsp freshly chopped parsley**

1 Heat the oil in a medium frying pan until hot. Put 2 heart-shaped silicone poaching rings or deep-sided pastry cutters in the pan and crack an egg into each. Reduce the heat and cook gently for 5-8min, depending on how you and your partner like your eggs cooked.

2 Meanwhile, preheat the grill to a medium-hot setting and cook the bacon for 2-3min on each side until cooked through. Drain and keep warm. Toast the bread slices and once cooked, cut out a large heart from each, using a pastry cutter.

3 To serve, spread the toast lightly with butter or margarine, and arrange on warm plates. Top with bacon rashers. Drain the eggs using a slotted spatula and place one on top of each portion. Serve immediately sprinkled with parsley.

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- **2tbsp fine cornmeal**
- **2tsp freshly chopped or 1tsp dried thyme + extra for sprinkling**
- **Salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- **1tbsp vegetable oil**
- **100g cherry vine tomatoes**
- **2 toasting muffins**
- **15g butter or margarine, softened**
- **Sweet mustard to serve (optional)**

1 In a bowl, mix the sausagemeat with the cornmeal, thyme and seasoning. Divide into 4 and form into small patties about 7cm in diameter.

2 Preheat the grill to a medium-hot setting and arrange the sausage patties on the grill rack. Brush lightly with oil and cook for 4-5min on each side until cooked through. Drain and keep warm. Grill the tomatoes in the grill pan, stem side down, for 3-4min until tender.

3 Split the muffins and toast lightly for 1-2min. Spread with butter and top with sausage patties and tomatoes. Sprinkle with extra thyme, and accompany with mustard if liked.



RECIPES AND FOOD STYLING BY KATHRYN HAWKINS
PHOTOGRAPHY: STUART MACGREGOR



246 Calories per portion

Lovin' Spoonfuls

Ingredients (Serves 2)

- **50g caster sugar**
- **250g mixed prepared fresh blueberries, raspberries and chopped strawberries**
- **1½tsp cornflour**
- **1 vanilla pod, split**
- **200g Greek yoghurt**
- **Mint to decorate**

1 Put the sugar in a saucepan with 100ml water and heat, stirring, until the sugar dissolves. Bring to the boil, add the fruit and simmer gently for 2min to soften a little.

2 Blend the cornflour with 2tbsp cold water and stir into the fruit. Bring back to the boil and cook for a further 1min to thicken. Remove from the heat, add the vanilla pod and leave to cool completely.

3 To serve, discard the vanilla pod and layer the compôte with spoonfuls of yoghurt in serving glasses or tumblers. Decorate with mint.

TIP: Use a frozen berry mix if preferred – leave to thaw in a saucepan. Heat gently with the sugar and thicken and flavour as above.

More recipes on page 37

Honour your favourite sport with a limited edition first-ever...

The Winning Shot Men's Bowls Watch



BOWL AND JACK DESIGN PLATED WITH LAVISH ROSE GOLD, YELLOW GOLD AND RHODIUM DETAIL

GENUINE STITCHED LEATHER STRAP

ENGRAVED ON THE REVERSE WITH A FAMED QUOTE BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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Etched with a bowls player silhouette and Shakespeare's quote



Bowls and jack plated in rose gold, yellow gold and rhodium

STRICTLY LIMITED TO 4,999 EDITIONS

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(s+h included)

Shown larger than actual size.
Watch face measures 1.62 inches (4 cm) in width, inc. bezel.

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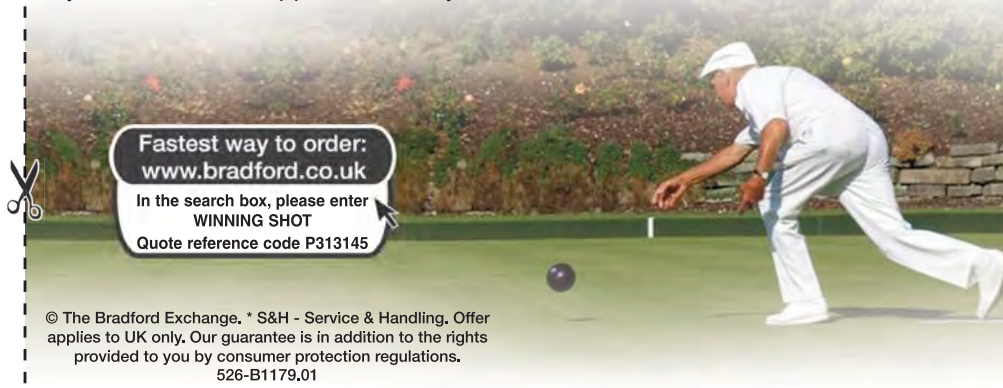
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526-B1179.01

Little Poppet Apple and Maple Pancakes

499 Calories per portion



Ingredients (Serves 2)

- **2 small Pink Lady apples, washed and cored**
- **65g self raising flour**
- **Pinch of salt**
- **1 medium egg, beaten**
- **40g butter, melted**
- **6tbsp maple syrup**
- **4tbsp whole milk**
- **2tsp vegetable oil**

1 Coarsely grate one of the apples in a mixing bowl. Sift the flour and salt on top and make a well in the centre. Add the egg, 2tbsp melted butter, 1tbsp maple syrup and the milk and gradually work into the flour using a whisk until well blended.

2 Heat a large frying pan until hot. Brush lightly with oil. Spoon half the batter in 4 separate pools into the pan and cook over a medium heat for 2-3min until bubbles appear and the surface sets lightly. Flip over and cook for about 2min until golden. Remove from the pan, cover and keep warm while preparing 4 more pancakes in the same way. Keep warm.

3 Cut the remaining apple into 8 rings. In the same frying pan, add the remaining melted butter and 1tbsp maple syrup and heat until bubbling. Cook the apple slices for 2-3min on each side until tender.

4 To serve, stack the pancakes and apple slices and accompany with the remaining maple syrup poured over. Serve immediately.



Sugar and Spice Sweethearts

235 Calories per portion

Ingredients (Serves 2)

- **8 small slices white bread**
- **25g unsalted butter, very soft**
- **½tsp ground cinnamon**
- **1tbsp caster sugar**
- **Greek yoghurt, fresh blueberries and strawberries to serve**

1 Preheat the grill to a medium-hot setting and toast the bread for 1-2min on each side until lightly toasted. Place on a wire rack to cool. Meanwhile, mix the butter, cinnamon and sugar together.

2 Using an 8cm wide heart cutter, cut out a heart from each slice. Spread generously with the butter on one side and put back under the grill, butter side up, for a few sec until bubbling and golden.

3 Serve with yoghurt and berries on the side, with a mint sprig to decorate.

Mardi Gras

AROUND THE WORLD



Grab your mask and feathers to experience one of the brightest, wildest street festivals of all!

RIO

The four-day holiday celebrating Carnaval in Rio is one of the country's biggest events of the year and certainly the biggest carnival in the world. Each February, half a million visitors descend upon this Brazilian hotspot to join the locals in four days of fun. Samba fever sweeps through the capital as celebrations build to the climax – the spectacular Samba parade!





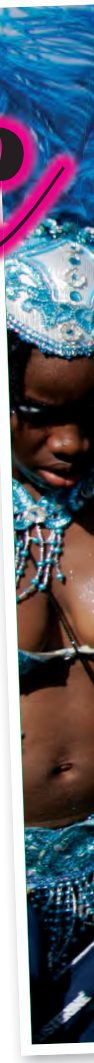
NEW ORLEANS

For many, New Orleans is the place to be when it comes to celebrating "Fat Tuesday" in all its glory. Each year, an estimated one million visitors gather on the streets donning masks, costumes and colourful beads in the traditional colours of purple, green and gold, to enjoy the amazing parades and masquerade balls and join one of the biggest, wildest parties in America. Float riders toss "throws" to the crowds such as small toys and special doubloon coins, personalised to individual floats. A great Mardi Gras memento for the lucky few who catch them!

QUEBEC

Still in the depths of the winter months, Mardi Gras celebrations in Canada have a distinctly chilly air but are just as much fun for the many who turn out to take part in the array of fabulous events.

Known as the world's snow capital, Quebec City hosts a fabulous 17-day winter festival featuring everything from dog sledding to the famous ice palace. One of the festival highlights is the parade featuring the arrival of Bonhomme, the carnival's much-loved mascot.



WORDS: SUSAN ANDERSON PICTURES: ALAMY, ISTOCKPHOTO, GETTY IMAGES



TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

In a riot of colour and calypso music, this Caribbean carnival is a raucous event. Painted bodies beat a rhythm along the streets to the sound of traditional steel-pan music when, two days before Ash Wednesday, the delights of carnival begin as darkness falls. Revellers party on through the night to the pre-dawn celebration of J'Ouvert (French for "day open") which embraces the darker elements of the island's folklore and history. Watch as revellers coat themselves in chocolate, mud and oil and dress up like devils, monsters and imps!

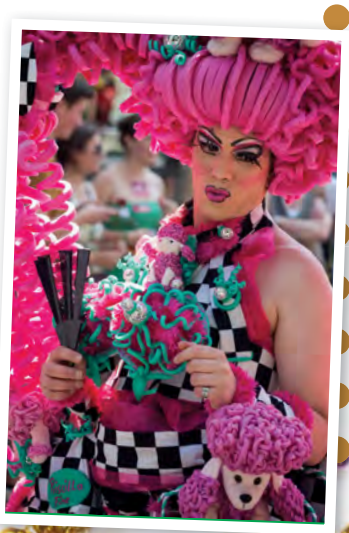
VENICE



Between its stunning setting and the beautiful array of traditional Venetian masks on display, the Venice Mardi Gras is a high class affair. Carnevale season lasts several weeks with celebrations culminating on Shrove Tuesday. Taking inspiration from the past, visitors will see plenty of elaborate Baroque costumes, and the thousands of mysterious masked party-goers bring a magical air to San Marco Square and beyond.

COLOGNE

For the lucky Germans, the party season begins on November 11 and continues throughout the winter months, culminating in Mardi Gras celebrations this month.
In the city of Cologne, events include parades, balls and traditional variety shows as well as their hilarious pageant of fools!



FLIPPIN' GOOD FUN!



In France, tradition dictates that pancake flippers touch the handle of the frying pan and make a wish while the pancake is turned, while holding a coin in one hand. We've been celebrating Shrove Tuesday for more than 1000 years – it was traditionally a day when all fatty, rich foods would be used up before Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. The world's biggest pancake was cooked in Rochdale in 1994. It measured 15m in diameter, weighed three tonnes and contained a diet-busting two million calories.

NEW IMPROVED PLAN◊

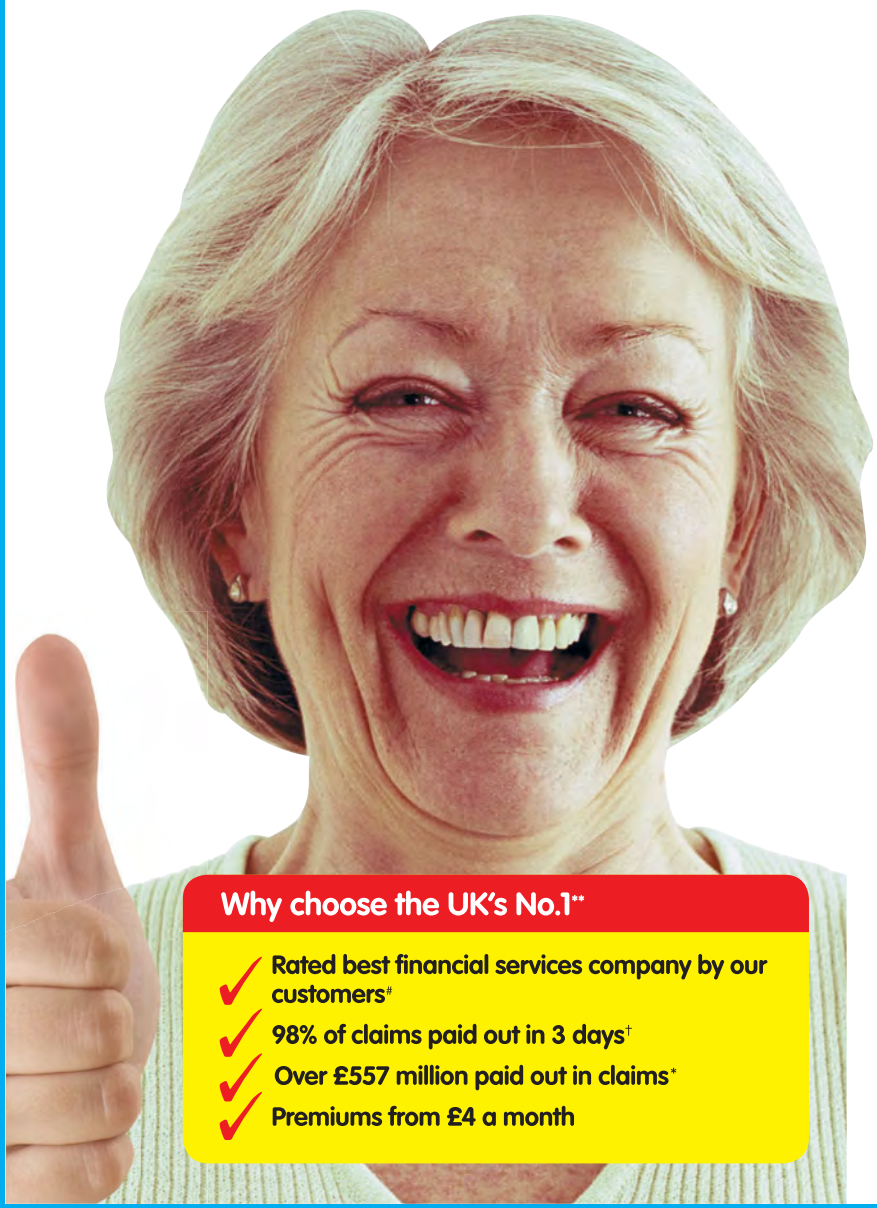
MORE COVER FOR YOUR MONEY◊

Looking for

If you're aged 50 to 85 you can afford 14p a

You're in!

If you've been thinking about life cover, then maybe you should think about joining over 863,000* men and women who have a Guaranteed Over 50 Plan – the UK's most popular choice for a plan of this type.**



What makes the Guaranteed Over 50 Plan so popular? Well, premiums start from £4 a month, that's just 14p a day. But perhaps the most attractive feature of this Plan is that, if you are aged 50-85, we will not turn you down! There's no medical, no health questions and its easy to apply. Read on to find out more…

No medical or health questions

The Guaranteed Over 50 Plan, provided by AXA Wealth Ltd is life insurance that really can help to give you life-long peace of mind. We guarantee to accept you if you are aged 50-85, with no medical or health questions to answer. Then, as long as you continue to keep up your premiums, a fixed cash sum will be paid out on your death after two years. If you were to die in the first two years, we'd return all the premiums paid, plus half as much again, unless you were to die as the result of an accident when we would pay out the full cash sum.

Funeral costs

Cover starts from just £4 a month, however when choosing your premium it's worth considering that the average cost of a funeral is £3,590†† and is likely to rise in the future. And while £4 a month won't pay for all of your funeral, if you're worried about your loved ones having to pay funeral costs, this could certainly help. What's more, the Guaranteed Over 50 Plan is now offering you more for the same monthly premium. You just need to be sure you're happy with your monthly premiums as they are payable for life and if you stop paying your Plan will end and you won't get anything back.

Why choose the UK's No.1**

- ✓ Rated best financial services company by our customers#
- ✓ 98% of claims paid out in 3 days†
- ✓ Over £557 million paid out in claims*
- ✓ Premiums from £4 a month

life cover?

SunLife

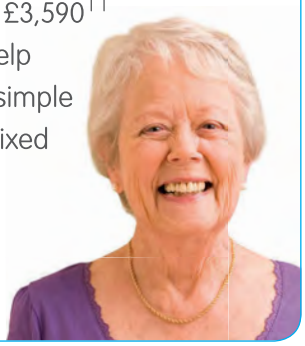
and day,

Ease the worry of funeral costs

"You may be surprised to learn that the average cost of a funeral is now £3,590†† – not the kind of sum that many people can find easily. Life cover can help pay towards these costs and help provide peace of mind. This Plan is simple to apply for, there's no medical, no health questions and it pays out a fixed cash sum for your loved ones from just £4 a month.

So why not find out more?"

TV's Annette Crosbie



You'll always know where you stand

We promise that your premiums will never go up and your cover will never go down, although inflation will reduce its value over time. You should also be aware that depending on how long you live, you could pay in more than the cash sum paid out.

Act Now!

To help you decide, we've put together an information pack which includes full details of the Plan and personal examples of the levels of cover you could receive. Requesting more information costs nothing and commits you to nothing. And because we don't ask any medical or health questions, applying for the Plan really is easy. Simply call our friendly UK based team on **0800 169 2044**, or fill in and return the coupon to the FREEPOST address. You can even apply online at **www.sunlife.co.uk/50plan**

CHOOSE ONE OF THESE GREAT GIFTS AS A THANK YOU FOR TAKING OUT A PLAN!



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**Most popular whole of life guaranteed acceptance plan bought directly. ABI statistics - 12 months up to 30.06.2014. #Source: In 2014, Critical Research conducted research on behalf of SunLife. They anonymously asked SunLife customers to name the financial services company they considered best in terms of product quality, value and customer care. More respondents named SunLife than any other brand. †Upon receipt of required documentation. *As at 21st August 2014. ††Source: Average of quotes for standard funeral arrangements from a sample of funeral directors. YouGov, July 2014. ◊All customers who take out a new Plan will receive a bigger cash sum, for the same age and premium, than if they had taken out a Plan between 1st Jan 2013 and 1st Jan 2015. This excludes a special offer period from 1st Aug 2014 to 30th Nov 2014 when the cash sums available may have been bigger or smaller than the current cash sums for the same age and premium.

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MyWeekly10Feb15 Ref: 1670511

Good week for...



Emmerdale's **David** is surprised to hear Chrissie's plans to expand his shop onto the farm as an extended franchise. Alicia's completely thrilled and on board – but is David feeling quite the same?

TV WATCH

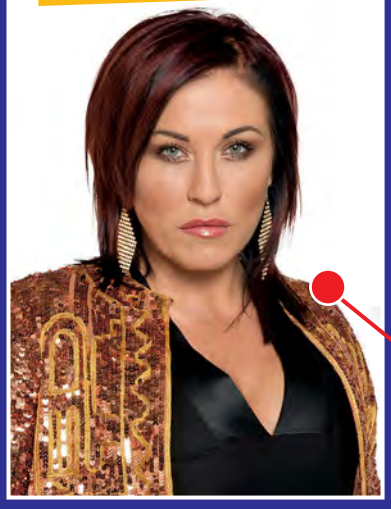
We bring you the latest storylines, drama and gossip from your favourite soaps

Pssst!

Ant 'n' Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway is gearing up for a new series this summer – but it wouldn't work without the likes of you taking part! The people at Takeaway HQ are looking for people to surprise. Log onto **www.itv.com/beontv** and fill in an application before the end of the month to be in with the chance to appear on telly!



Bad week for...



EastEnders' **Kat** is struggling financially. She rejects Alfie's offer to go to Ian's wedding and goes mad when he keeps food for her. Stacey says she has to "forgive him, or divorce him"!

CORONATION ST.



Twelve-year-old Faye is pregnant! After admitting to Craig that she's still putting on weight, despite her diet, he jokes she might be pregnant. Horrified, Faye takes a test and is dumbfounded to find it's positive! Who could the dad be? And what will Anna say?

Also this week... Linda snaps and plans to tell her girls the truth, Dev puts Mary in charge and Callum's playing mind games!

EMMERDALE



Tormented Belle has "Gemma" back in her head and she's making Belle wash her medication down the drain! "Gemma" makes Belle leave home, but she is soon found at derelict Wylie's farm, teetering close to the edge – and what happens next leaves everyone distraught.

Also this week... Andy breaks down when Sarah starts asking questions, Chrissie has business plans for David and bitter Emma is causing chaos!

EastEnders

Lauren's in a state this week as she discovers shocking details about Lucy's killer and attempts to break into Emma's phone. She can't resist reaching for the bottle, but drunkenly reveals to Stacey that she knows something.

Also this week... Jane remembers why she loves Ian, Dot is stunned as Nick shows his true colours and Roxy and Charlie do the unthinkable!



WORDS: ALISON GRAVES PICTURES: BBC PICTURES, ITV PICTURES, REX FEATURES

My Weekly | Travel

DUBROVNIK

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- Tour of the astonishing Amalfi coast – one of the world's most beautiful coastlines
- Visit to charming, hill-top Ravello with its incredible panoramic views and the setting for Wagner's opera Parsifal
- Escorted by an experienced tour manager

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Voyages For Two!



A Fred.Olsen Cruise Lines adventure in Norway

Go on – why not try a romantic cruise for your next holiday?

The romance of the high seas seems to be addictive – but if you're new to cruising, there are all kinds of short trips on offer where you can literally test the water before committing to a longer voyage.

If you're a reluctant flyer or just like the idea of travelling without baggage restrictions, pick one of the many cruises departing from British ports such as Southampton, Liverpool or Newcastle.

Holland America Line, for instance, offer week-long summer cruises from Dover to the picturesque Norwegian fjords with stopovers in colourful Bergen and the Art Deco town of Alesund.

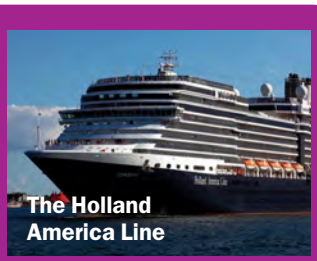
If you're happy to fly, Vancouver is their departure point for cruises via Alaska's Inside Passage to see glaciers, marine mammals and snowy mountain peaks.

Want some onshore activity to work off that lovely cruise cuisine? Try the Cruise and Walk programme operated by Ramblers Worldwide Holidays and Fred.Olsen Cruise Lines. The worldwide programme includes week-long itineraries to the Norwegian fjords and the Scottish islands, as well as a new French rivers cruise.

Only time for a mini-break? Sample life at sea on a two-night ferry trip with DFDS Seaways from Newcastle, visiting

TIPS FOR TRAVELLERS

- **Cruise the world with Holland America Line** – www.hollandamerica.com
- **The new Rivers of the French Atlantic Coast itinerary costs from £1,125 per person for 8 nights** www.cruiseandwalk.co.uk
- **Enjoy the chateaux and heritage towns of the Loire on CroisiEurope's newest ship. Six days from £1,100.** www.croisieurope.co.uk
- **Two nights on board a DFDS cruise ferry with a day in Amsterdam, from £79pp** www.dfdsseaways.co.uk
- **For details on Brittany Ferries' latest Gourmet Cruise offers to Roscoff, Saint Malo and Caen, from £92pp visit** www.brittanyferries.com
- **Cruise the rivers and canals of Europe with Le Boat** www.leboat.co.uk
- **Sail along Britain's first Ship Canal or the River Severn for 2-5 nights from Gloucester. En-suite cabins, full board and excursions included.** www.englishholidaycruises.co.uk
- **7-night Adriatic cruise from Venice in September with Silversea from £2,750pp** www.silversea.com



The Holland America Line

WORDS: GILLIAN THORNTON PICTURES: ALAMY

TRAVEL NEWS

❤ **Bizarre items left behind at Travel Lodges up and down the country have been revealed. A pug dog called Dancer, a husband, a case full of pound coins to the value of £3,000, a suitcase full of soup and a Chanel alligator handbag worth £10,000 were just some of the crazy findings!**

❤ **Visit the beautiful grounds of Caerhays**



Blooming lovely Caerhays

Castle and explore the springtime wonderland that is Caerhays Woodland Gardens. As a Mother's Day treat, all mums will receive a free camellia on entry worth £7. The Grade 2 listed woodland gardens span over 120 acres and the camellias, magnolias and rhododendrons that grow in abundance are nothing short of spectacular. Plan your trip for next month by visiting www.caerhays.co.uk – especially if you want to book afternoon tea, too.



Fine dining on Brittany Ferries



Cruise the Seine for spectacular views

Amsterdam, Harlem or the fabulous Keukenhof Gardens.

Alternatively take an overnight gourmet mini-cruise with Brittany Ferries from Portsmouth to Caen, or Plymouth to Roscoff with dinner on board and lunch on shore. Or enjoy lunch in Saint Malo with return overnight ferry travel to Portsmouth.

River cruises offer the chance to pack romantic cities and scenery into one short holiday along Europe's most famous waterways – the Danube and the Rhine, the Seine, Rhône, and Moselle. This year, Croisi'Europe becomes the first company to operate a cruise vessel with cabins on the Loire.

If you like the idea of playing admiral on a cruise boat for two, try a short break with Le Boat on a self-drive river cruiser – no previous experience necessary. Taster destinations in France include Cognac, the Camargue and Brittany.

But for the last word in luxury, try an Adriatic cruise with Silversea. With just 500 passengers on board and your very own butler, this is the ultimate romantic voyage, leaving from Venice and stopping off to visit stunning towns such as Ravenna, Split and Dubrovnik all within a week.

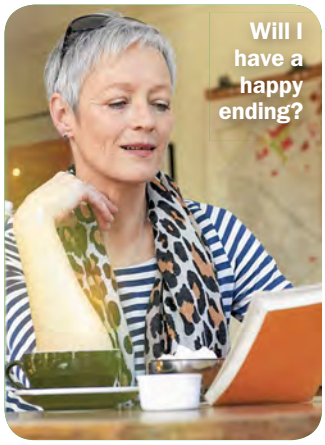


...or the Fjords with Holland America

SORAYA PREDICTS

Send your question to Soraya for an amazingly accurate prediction





Q I enjoy my Monday coffee in my local bookshop, but lately it's been even better. There's a very handsome man who seems to be there alone, too. We've said a few words, but I would love to join him for a coffee to see where this could go. He looks very approachable, yet I feel I can't. Would I be making a fool of myself, or is there love on my cards?
Ms Smyth, Sheffield, born 06.06.40 at 11.13am

A In your chart there are several opportunities for romantic connections. There is a risk of expressing your feelings too easily or too soon, but you can draw romance towards you.

Find the south-west corner of your room and place two pink candles there. Add items such as photos of couples in loving situations or ornaments in pairs. Each evening light your candles, play romantic music, close your eyes and visualise that you are in a romantic relationship but NOT a particular person; you may find yourself tied to a relationship that does not meet your needs. Snuff (don't blow) your candles out and replace as needed. Do this daily for at least a week. Before going for your cuppa, write down your phone number; place it on his table when you enter or leave. If he is interested he will call.

Soraya

Soraya's Psychic Postbag, My Weekly, DC Thomson & Co Ltd, 80 Kingsway East, Dundee DD4 8SL. Include date, time & place of birth.

SORAYA'S LATEST PREDICTIONS

GUIDANCE LINE



As we journey through life, many problems and obstacles can block our way. Soraya has a lifetime of experience using Tarot and Runes and, with these skills, she will help you decide what to do for the best. If you are at a difficult point in your life and feel in need of guidance and insight, Soraya's words of wisdom will direct you along life's path, towards serenity, tranquillity and peace.

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Jennie should pay close attention to everything this week as someone may be trying to take advantage or dupe her into doing something. She may not realise until too late.

PISCES Feb 19 – March 20

There may be a tendency to worry about things that have not happened or things you cannot change. Your view of reality may be misguided.

ARIES March 21 – April 20

You will feel more settled giving you time to think about your responsibilities. Later you will be able to spend time enjoying yourself.

TAURUS April 21 – May 20

You can expect to be in the wrong even when you are right during this period as everything appears to conspire against you.

GEMINI May 21 – June 21

This week you will gradually find that you feel as though things are returning to normal after a peculiar period. You can breathe a sigh of relief.

CANCER June 22 – July 21

Be active in expressing your feelings this week and you will make friends and develop other relationships. A good period for financial matters.

LEO July 22 – Aug 22

This is a good period that will benefit domestic affairs. The focus of your attention is likely to be on getting things done and making a fresh start.

VIRGO Aug 23 – Sept 22

The need to investigate new ways of achieving something will drive you. You may find you can improve financial prospects through marketing.

LIBRA Sept 23 – Oct 22

You may be privy to a secret and keeping it to yourself may prove difficult – nevertheless do not repeat what you have been told.

SCORPIO Oct 23 – Nov 21

Incoming news may give you reason to hope for better things in the future. Affairs of the heart and personal matters look promising too.

SAGITTARIUS Nov 22 – Dec 21

A small windfall may give you the chance to do something you've always wanted to do or to change something that you have grown tired of.

CAPRICORN Dec 22 – Jan 20

The influence of the Moon in harmony with Venus will mark a very successful period – expect general advancement and prosperity.

AQUARIUS Jan 21 – Feb 18

Your feelings will be rewarded and reciprocated making this a very good time for pleasure, social success and advancement.

WORDS: SORAYA WWW.SORAYA.CO.UK PICTURES: GETTY IMAGES, ITV PICTURES
SORAYA IS UNABLE TO ENTER INTO PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE WITH READERS. PHONELINE FOR ENTERTAINMENT PURPOSES ONLY

Valentine Dinner

Everything had to be perfect – but that seemed unlikely…



By Jan Snook

"Florence, please!" David said, not for the first time. "Look, it's nearly eight o'clock, you're supposed to be in bed. I've already tucked you in twice. Chloe will be here soon, and I've still got lots to do. Please! Go – to – bed. Now!"

"I'm just getting my colouring book," five-year-old Florence said obstinately. "It's on the dresser."

"It's not the only thing on the dresser," David said. "A lot of your dolls' house furniture is there too. And I want the house to look really tidy for Chloe. So get the things off the dresser and take them upstairs. Quickly."

He looked at his small daughter and bent to kiss the top of her head. He shouldn't get cross with her. She'd got used to having his attention all to herself since her mother died, and since that was over three years ago, the last few months of sharing him with Chloe had probably come as rather a shock.

"Why can't I stay up to see Chloe?" Florence asked, with a final attempt at non-compliance.

David took a deep breath, glancing once again at his watch.

"You know why, sweetheart. It's Valentine's Day. It's a very special day, and I need to talk to Chloe. About grown-up things. You can see Chloe tomorrow, OK?"

If everything went according to plan, that was. It didn't bear thinking about.

At that point, inevitably, the smoke alarm went off and the doorbell rang

"And now I've got to get the dinner and tidy the house, so you could help me a lot by tidying the dresser and going to bed, OK?"

Florence left the room reluctantly, and he could hear her picking things up off the dresser and taking herself upstairs. He breathed a sigh of relief and went into the sitting room to plump up cushions, glancing anxiously at the time every few seconds.

Champagne in fridge? Check. Roses in vase? Check. Well, check-ish. Not perhaps the best arranged flowers in the world, but he'd done his best. Casserole in oven? Check. Music? In the CD player, just needed turning on.

Hang on… David ran into the kitchen and opened the oven door. Smoke poured out, filling the small room. The recipe had said to turn down the temperature after the first hour… He grabbed the casserole dish with a handy tea towel, yelped as he burned himself, grabbed oven gloves and yanked the casserole out, spilling some of the sauce down his shirt and trousers and on to the floor… at which point, inevitably, the smoke alarm went off and the doorbell rang. Right on time.

It wasn't the look he'd been after. Red in the face and tomato-spattered, he let Chloe in, apologising profusely. Great.

Candles were not softly lighting the sitting-room, and the carefully chosen music was not soothing the fevered brow. OK, so at least she would know what she was letting herself in for.

Chloe, on the other hand, was looking beautiful. As well as cool and serene. There couldn't have been a greater contrast, David thought miserably.

"Would you like me to come back in a few minutes?" she asked, laughing.

"No. No, of course not. It's great to see you," David said. "But…"

Chloe leaned forward and kissed him.

"I was going to say 'don't kiss me!' I'm rather… hot," he added.

Chloe laughed again. "Shall I put this in the fridge?" she asked, indicating the bottle of white wine she was holding.

Continued overleaf

ILLUSTRATIONS: THINKSTOCK

Continued from previous page

"Yes, that would… No!" She didn't need to see all his careful preparations. Or the champagne. "I'll do it," he said, taking the bottle from her. "Thank you."

Chloe followed him into the kitchen, and they both gazed at the casserole. It was still bubbling angrily.

"I'm sure it just needs a stir," Chloe said. "Casseroles are very good-tempered. And it smells delicious. What are we eating with it?"

He hadn't done anything with the salad! He'd at least meant to get it out of the bag, for goodness' sake.

David groaned, and Chloe laughed. There was a pattern here somewhere, David thought dolefully.

"Do you know, I think you should go into the sitting-room and I should go and get us both a drink. I'll deal with this later."

Chloe looked around assessingly.

"I, on the other hand, think you should go up and change your shirt and trousers."

When David came back downstairs, Chloe had returned the casserole to the oven, wiped the floor, and was calmly tossing a salad, wearing an apron that he didn't even know he had. He couldn't help reflecting that she looked extremely at home in his kitchen.

He smiled. Things were looking up.



By the time they were both sitting down with some olives and a glass of wine, David's confidence was beginning to return. He had been meaning to wait until after dinner to ask her, but maybe he should strike while the iron was hot. Or the casserole. No time like the present. *Please let her say yes.*

"Will you excuse me just a moment?" he asked, smiling in anticipation.

He walked through to the dining-room and gazed at the beautifully tidy dresser top. Usually it had piles of bills and Florence's belongings strewn over it. This evening, nothing.

Absolutely nothing. And this was, he now remembered bitterly, where he had put down the small blue velvet box. It was nowhere to be seen.

His heart began to race, then pound. Chloe would be able to see it beating through his clean shirt.

Take a deep breath.

The box couldn't be far away. He heard an echo of himself telling Florence to clear the dresser. She must have taken him extremely literally.

But where would she have put it?

He went back into the sitting room, trying to smile. Unsuccessfully, evidently.

"David, what on earth's wrong?" She sounded wonderfully concerned.

He wrung his hands, then winced, and Chloe got to her feet.

"David," she said, taking his hands and looking at them, "that's a nasty burn. You should put it under cold water."

"Oh! Yes, I burned myself just as you arrived. I'll… I'll go up to the bathroom. I think there's some stuff for burns in the medicine cabinet."

David rushed up the stairs, and into Florence's bedroom. She was, naturally, sound asleep. Just as he'd planned. He shook her gently, mentally cursing.

"Florence? Sweetheart?" he whispered.

She turned over grumpily, vaguely swatting at him with a sleepy arm.

"Florence? When you tidied the dresser, what did you do with the little blue box? Sweetheart?"

She opened one eye.

"Toppadadess," she mumbled.

"What did you say?"

"On top of the desk," she repeated.

"Thank you!" On top of the desk! Really a very sensible place after all.

David left the room and raced back down the stairs, conscious of sounds of stirring coming from Florence's room. He let himself in to the study and hurried to the desk. The sound of a bump and a wail came from upstairs, followed by footsteps in the hall.

"Can I help?"

David turned round. Chloe was looking at him, puzzled.

"I… I was just looking for something," he said unconvincingly. "The burn cream! I keep it in here. It's a handy place…"

He tailed off. They looked upwards as the wails became more insistent.

"I'll go and see her." Chloe disappeared.

David was too flustered to argue. She'd said "on top of the desk", but the desktop was totally clear. He opened the single small drawer. Inside were receipts, keys, ancient raffle tickets, a spare pair of glasses. If it was here, he'd see it. And anyway, it would be on the top. No little blue box.

He hurried over to the desk. The sound of a bump and a wail came from upstairs

Upstairs the wailing had stopped. He closed the drawer slowly. He would have to ask Florence again. He took a deep breath and went up the stairs.

Chloe was sitting on the floor in all her finery, while Florence showed her the dolls' house.

"And it's got a piano," she was saying, lifting the lid so that Chloe could see the printed notes. "It doesn't actually play."

"Did you find what you were looking for?" Chloe asked him innocently.

David shook his head.

"That's a shame," she continued, and he had the distinct impression she was trying not to laugh. "Did you by any chance look," she asked, standing up so that he got a quick glimpse of blue velvet inside the dolls' house, "on top of the desk?"

THE AUTHOR SAYS…

"Why is it that when one thing goes wrong or I start to panic, suddenly everything goes wrong, however carefully I've planned? A particularly bad day inspired this story!"

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BEAT THE SLEEP SABOTEURS

Fix those bad habits and let the experts help send you on your way to the land of Nod!



Your Bedroom Temperature

"Your bedroom should be between 16 and 18°C – the optimum temperature to ensure a good night's sleep – so check your thermostat," says sports sleep expert Nick Littlehales www.sportsleepcoach.com. "And ensure you are warmer than the bed, bedroom and bedding; a warm shower can do this. A higher body temperature released into cooler bedding induces a natural sleep state."



Play it cool and be comfy

GET MORE ZZZZs: Choose bedding that's breathable, comfortable and sleep-inducing. Check your pillow supports your neck and spine. Place the middle of the pillow over your arm; if the sides hang down, it's time to buy a new one!

Look At Your Diet



Who knew breakfast affects sleep!

"Skipping breakfast – or eating breakfast too late – suppresses the production of melatonin (the sleep hormone) and causes the body to produce stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol," warns Silentnight's resident sleep expert, Dr Nerina Ramlakhan. Going to bed hungry can also play havoc with sleep patterns and your nightly tipple could be causing problems, too. Although alcohol can cause you to feel drowsy, the effects are temporary. When they wear off in the early hours it brings your body out of its deep sleep stage.

GET MORE ZZZZs: Eat breakfast within an hour of getting up and have a small snack before bed. You should also swap your usual nightcap for a warm, milky drink.

So Tired – But Still Wired

Your body is ready to sleep but your brain is working overtime. Sometimes we can't get a thought, event or idea out of our minds – and this can really disrupt our sleeping patterns particularly if you're worrying about something which is out of your control. Stress hormones adrenaline and cortisol aren't conducive to a good night's sleep, while feeling anxious about getting enough sleep only makes things worse.

GET MORE ZZZZs: Keep a notebook beside your bed so you can write down anything that comes into your mind. This releases your thoughts allowing you to sleep. Or get up and do a puzzle or read fiction to distract your mind before trying to sleep again.



Switch Off Your Smartphone

Sleeping with your phone causes hyper vigilance – feeling constantly tense and on guard. "Subconsciously, you're expecting a call or text and this means your sleep will be lighter," explains sleep expert Dr Neil Stanley. The second problem is the light it emits, which interferes with the body's natural rhythm, tricking your body into believing it's daytime.

GET MORE ZZZZs: Use an old-fashioned alarm clock – and switch your phone off.



WORDS: MICHELE O'CONNOR PICTURES: SHUTTERSTOCK, GETTY IMAGES



TIP!
"Sleep hygiene can make all the difference for sleep problems – yet it's often overlooked," explains Sammy Margo. "Just spend half an hour 'preparing' for sleep: shutting down electrical items, a warm bath, reading a book, having a milky drink and dimming the lights."

Caffeine Habit

"Drink your morning mug of coffee by all means, but don't let it become your daily crutch," says Louise Daniel, matron at The Glen Hospital, Bristol www.spirehealthcare.com/bristol. "Relying on caffeine can lead to a vicious sleep-deprived cycle you may find hard to break."

GET MORE ZZZZs: Switch to herbal teas in the afternoon.



Break the cycle

Working Out



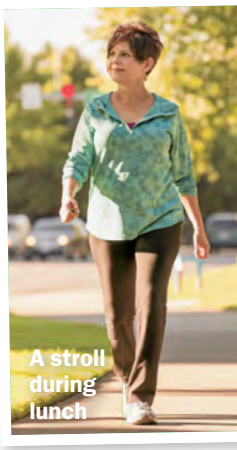
If you work out in the evening, the resulting rise in your core body temperature makes it harder to drop off, says sleep expert Sammy Margo (www.sammymargo.com). Studies show morning exercisers get better-quality sleep because the daily hormone cycle is re-set.

GET MORE ZZZZs: No choice but to exercise in the evening? Jump in a cool shower afterwards to lower your temperature to normal body temperature.

Your Lifestyle

If your daily routine follows a pattern of waking up, driving to work and slaving in an office, you aren't getting enough fresh air or sunshine. Both are needed to boost energy levels, immunity and aid sleep.

GET MORE ZZZZs: Step out at lunchtime or walk the kids to school. Open windows to let in air and sunshine, and remember the best time to rise and shine is when it starts to get light naturally. This stimulates energising hormones like serotonin, cortisol and adrenaline and inhibits the sleep-inducing melatonin.



A stroll during lunch

Dr Sarah Jarvis

Is it time for a health MOT?

Your body needs regular check-ups to keep it running in good condition!



Do you have a car – or a boiler in your home? If you'd used them regularly for years without getting them serviced, you wouldn't be at all surprised if they broke down.

Exactly the same applies to the astonishingly well-oiled machine that is the human body.

When you're young and carefree, most people take their health for granted and rarely get more than a sniffle or the odd ache. As you get older, conditions like osteoarthritis, causing pains in knees, hips and hands, get more common. But so does heart disease – and most people don't know they have a problem until they have a potentially fatal heart attack.

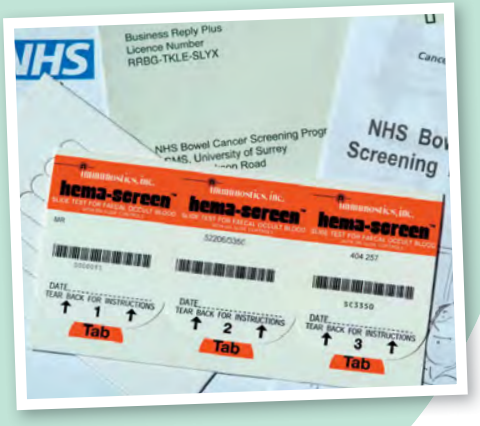
That's why regular health MOTs are so vital. They can pick up risk factors (like high blood pressure and raised cholesterol) and make sure you get them treated, to reduce the risk of you becoming a heart disease statistic. It's been astonishingly effective – we have more than halved the number of deaths across the UK from heart attack and stroke in less than 50 years. Make sure you're part of that success story by booking up for a health MOT if you haven't had one.

Booking in

Everyone in the UK is entitled to a free NHS health check every 5 years from the age of 40. Some are done through GPs surgeries, with some practices running a dedicated MOT clinic. But some pharmacies offer a similar service – speak to your practice or pharmacy.

Screening counts

Just like with heart disease, screening for some kinds of cancer can save lives by picking up early changes at a more treatable stage.



Regular health MOTs are vital. They can pick up risk factors and make sure you get them treated

Heart a-flutter?

While you can't measure your blood pressure or cholesterol without a machine, you can check your pulse. Atrial Fibrillation or AF, the commonest abnormal heart rhythm in the UK, affects over a million people and can increase your risk of stroke. If you get palpitations, especially with tiredness, dizziness or shortness of breath, do see a doctor. And get into a habit as you get older of checking your pulse every so often. If it's very irregular with no obvious rhythm, speak to your doctor.



A familiar voice on TV and radio, My Weekly GP Dr Sarah Jarvis writes for you

What checks when?



Bowel cancer screening from home is offered every 2 years from 60-69 (being extended to age 74) in England; 60-74 in Northern Ireland and Wales and 50-74 in Scotland. Across the UK, every woman is invited to attend breast cancer screening every 3 years from the age of 50-70. This is being extended in England from age 47-73, but in other UK countries you can still get screened over the age of 70 by contacting your local breast screening unit. Cervical cancer screening uses a cervical smear test. In England, Northern Ireland and Wales, women are invited to have a smear every 3 years from age 25-50 and every 5 years from 50-64, while in Scotland, you'll be invited every 3 years from age 20-60. All these tests are free.

A word about him ...

The prostate gland at the base of the penis naturally gets bigger with age. This can lead to all sorts of waterworks problems – needing to pass water very often; rushing to the toilet but having to wait ages for the stream to start; or a poor urine stream. These can be signs of prostate cancer, but often have a non-cancerous cause. Do encourage your man to get them checked – medication or possibly surgery can be very effective. Problems with performance in the bedroom, or erectile dysfunction, affects as many as 40% of men over 40. They get more common with age, but can be due to some medications (especially blood pressure tablets) or undiagnosed type 2 diabetes. Show your love by having a gentle but honest discussion about your concerns and encouraging him to get checked out.

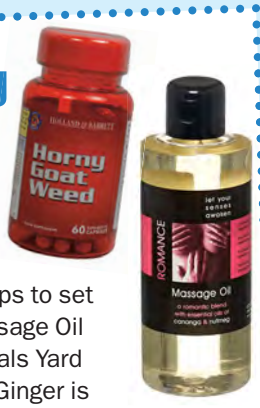


NEXT WEEK
Wholehearted health

Good To Know

Bringing you the latest health news, views and products

That lovin' feeling



Reignite that Valentine's Day passion with some of the products currently hitting Holland & Barrett's shelves. There's Horny Goat Weed to improve your libido, Scentchips to set the mood and Love Play Massage Oil Romance. If all else fails, Neals Yard Wholefoods Dark Chocolate Ginger is guaranteed to ginger you up!



Get kissing – sharing the bacteria in saliva builds up your immunity!

Be mole aware



With Valentine's Day fast approaching – and over 100,000 new cases of skin cancer diagnosed in the UK each year – the British Skin Foundation is urging us to check our loved one's moles! Things to look for include: moles that are growing or changing shape; moles developing new colours; moles becoming inflamed, bleeding, or red around the edges; and moles that are particularly itchy.

Showing that our wellbeing is always to the fore in the UK, health made up 43% of Google searches in 2013

NEWS FLASH!

Website Of The Week

www.bhf.org.uk/women

Knowledge is power, so make the British Heart Foundation your first stop in learning about the signs and symptoms of heart disease, and how to avoid it.

WORDS: KAREN BYROM PICTURES: ALAMY, SHUTTERSTOCK DR SARAH JARVIS IS UNABLE TO OFFER INDIVIDUAL ADVICE OR SEE INDIVIDUAL PATIENTS. ALL HEALTH CONTENT IN MY WEEKLY IS PROVIDED FOR GENERAL INFORMATION ONLY. PLEASE SEEK HELP FROM YOUR OWN GP IF YOU HAVE A MEDICAL PROBLEM.



Over 60 and feeling under the weather? A minor illness can get worse quickly.

This winter, pop into your local pharmacy for quick health advice or visit **www.nhs.uk/asap**

Early advice is the best advice.

If you're over 60 and feeling unwell, it's best to get help as soon as possible. Whether it's a chesty cough, trouble breathing, a cold or sore throat, you can get advice in person from your local pharmacist or online at **www.nhs.uk/asap**. Your local pharmacist is fully qualified to provide health advice and the advice on **www.nhs.uk/asap** is provided by the NHS. No problem is too small – your pharmacist wants to help. Early advice is the best advice.



Ask HELEN

Celebrity agony aunt **Helen Lederer** gives you her heartfelt advice every week in My Weekly

Is The Grass Greener?



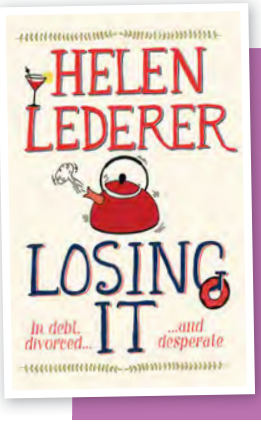
He's so grumpy with me

My husband used to be such an easy-going soul and friends with everyone in our street, but things have got difficult since we got new neighbours. These people have redesigned front and back gardens, and are always out weeding, strimming and planting up pots and raised beds. Our garden has been the same for 30 years and I love it, but I think the competitiveness of these new people has just made my husband unhappy. He is so grumpy with them and is cross with me whenever they add something new. Sometimes I just want us to move.

■ "An Englishman's home is his castle" until of course "the castle" next door looks better or changes! It certainly sounds as though your new neighbours have plenty of time on their hands – perhaps they are newly retired? They are transforming their property so presumably this is their thing? Maybe they want to put their garden up for awards! Maybe they just love it. It is sad that your husband feels as if all this garden activity is a competition, so that he does not enjoy your garden. But it is understandable that all this new endeavour has been clocked by him! So the question is how to change the negativity.

Remind him your garden is exactly as you want it

Have you, or they, tried to strike up a chat over their smart new fence and talk about the area? They are the newcomers and must have all sorts of questions about local issues. Express interest in their garden and finds what motivates them. At the same time it is necessary to encourage your husband and, as you say, remind him that your garden is exactly as you want it. Each to their own. Far better to make them your friends, or at least think of them as inoffensive neighbours – rather than sulk and fester about stuff you can't change!



Fictional Fun...

If you enjoyed Helen's short story on page 10, why not treat yourself to a copy of her first novel *Losing It* (Pan Macmillan, £7.99)? As you'd expect from Helen, it's a laugh-out-loud read told with the underlying warmth and sensitivity she displays each week on this page. Millie is the agony aunt for a magazine – but her own problems are about as bad as they get! In debt, divorced and desperate, she agrees to be front woman for a new diet pill – but it'll take more than that to solve her troubles...

5 TOP WAYS TO FEEL BETTER

My Weekly's life coach and relationships guru **Lynda Field** shares her 5 Top Tips every week



1 2 3 4 5

Contact a positive friend. Phone, email or text one of your upbeat pals. Positivity is contagious (as is negativity!) so reaching out to someone who can lift your spirits is one of the best things you can do for yourself. Put on a favourite piece of music and dance! This is perfect therapy (and one of my favourites).

Just smile! This will immediately increase your levels of endorphins or happiness hormones. Get creative. Make something and reconnect with your imagination. No need to create a masterpiece, simple tasks like baking a cake or repotting a plant will be all it takes to get your juices flowing.

Take a walk; a brilliant way to uplift your mood and engage with the natural world.

PICTURE: ALAMY

Write to Helen Lederer at: Ask Helen, My Weekly, 80 Kingsway East, Dundee DD4 8SL. Helen is unable to enter into private correspondence with readers. Contact Lynda Field at www.lyndafield.com

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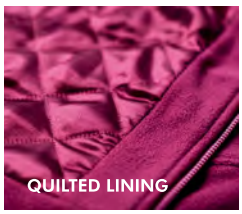
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MON£Y TALK



Consumer expert Sue Hayward's savvy finance tips

Fixed Rate For 10 Years?



It's a gamble

I heard you can get fixed mortgage rates for 10 years. Is this a good idea?

◆ Without a crystal ball, opting for a long term fixed rate deal like this is something of a gamble.

These 10-year fixed deals are relatively new. In the last year the number available has shot up from 7 to over 70. Right now Barclays has a very low 2.99% deal but you'll need a 40% deposit or sufficient equity in your property to qualify.

A long term fixed deal protects against future rate rises, but check small print. Switching again or repaying early can bring big penalties.

Our Insider's Guide To...
Cost Of Dating Agencies

Looking for love and need a helping hand? There are heaps of "introduction" agencies offering to play fairy godmother.

If you decide to join one, then the Association of British Introduction Agencies **www.abia.org.uk** is a good starting point. This covers offline agencies, and members must have been in business for over a year with a proper office address (not a PO Box number) to stand a chance of getting on the books.

Agencies operate in different ways, so check fees and options upfront. There may be an initial membership plus a monthly fee, and there are often different levels of service – from group events where you can turn up, buy your own drink and chat with other singles in a bar or restaurant to tailor-made personal introductions.

Check that the agency you're interested in operates in your area, so you won't end up travelling miles to events.

Online dating is a cheaper option, and can be free, but with over 1,500 sites out there it can be hard to sort the good from the bad. Ask around for recommendations; for security set up a separate email address for replies, and stay safe by meeting in a public place and letting someone know where you're going.



Some online agencies are free, but take care

At Your Service?

Cineworld vary ticket prices depending on location and I've discovered that's the case with Hollywood Bowl too. I saved £5 on family bowling checking two venues near me!

FACTS!

- **Remember to factor in the cost of any travel, meals out, or events which can be pricey.**
- There's no guarantee you'll find love – so don't feel that you have to join the most expensive agency.
- **Check cancellation rights and read the small print carefully.**

3 ways to SAVE

1 Check your breakdown cover! 1 in 6 will make a claim this winter, say Halifax Car Insurance. Cars over 10 years old and those with recurrent faults may not be covered, so do check.

2 Talking tax may be unromantic but can save money! If you're a couple with cash savings, use both your ISA allowances. Each gets an annual ISA allowance of £15,000 (£15,240 from April).

3 Planning a romantic meal for Valentine's Day? Save money going the day before, or after, as most vouchers and discount deals aren't valid on the 14th. Going another day may mean you save enough for a bottle of bubbly!

WORDS: SUE HAYWARD WWW.SUEHAYWARDMEDIA.COM PICTURES: GETTY IMAGES, SHUTTERSTOCK

STRENGTH TO SURVIVE APPEAL

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We would like to keep you informed about our projects and activities by post. However, if you would rather not receive such information, please email us at changes@oxfam.org.uk, phone 0300 200 1300 or write to Supporter Relations, Oxfam House, John Smith Drive, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 2JY.

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Bright Ideas!

Share your **top tips** and we can all have an easier life

Aggie MacKenzie's Expert Tips...

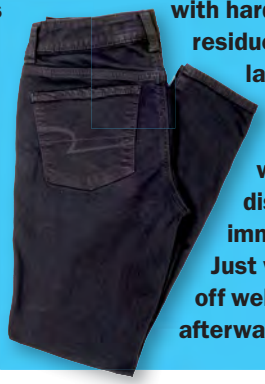
Our home and consumer expert Aggie MacKenzie shares her top household tips and suggestions each week



■ **If you ever get limescale deposit around the rim and spout of your kettle, a quick rub with an emery board will see to it.**



■ **If a black item has faded in colour over a number of washes, the chances are that this is due to a build-up of detergent residue rather than actual loss of dye. To sort this, soak the item for a few hours in warm water with a little clear vinegar added, rinse and wash in the machine as normal.**



■ **Are you busy making marmalade but your jam jar surfaces are annoyingly sticky with hard-to-shift residue from old labels? A squirt of WD40 will dissolve it immediately. Just wipe off well afterwards.**



Bird Café



I collected the net packaging from supermarket fruit packs, filled them with different bird foods and fixed them to a piece of recycled plastic with drainage holes punched through, to make this splendid bird café. The birds love it!

Vivien McLaren, Alsager



Rubber Grip

TOP TIP!

A great tip if you are having trouble opening your nail varnish. Simply slip elastic bands over the lid of the varnish to improve grip and open more easily. **Angela Garvin, Romford**

Refresh Your Hair

This is a tip for livening up your hair if it looks dull and flat. If you are going out and haven't time to wash your hair, brush it from the roots in the opposite direction to your normal style. This is not back combing (brushing). Then comb or brush it back into the style you want. It will now look fresh and bouncy.

Sandra Hunter, Halton

Pink For The Sink



To make sure everyone in the house knows which cleaning sponges to use in the bathroom I have a simple tip – I buy inexpensive cleaning sponges and we use "Pink for the Sink" and "Blue for the Loo".

Lynne Newton, Spennymoor

Everlasting Eggcups

When I broke my last china egg cup, I found the measure "ball" from the washing machine liquid was a perfect replacement. It is an ideal size, it's flexible and it won't break if I drop it! **Mrs J Taylor, Gillingham**



To Mum With Love

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Sue Angus, Wolverhampton

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Brain BOOSTERS

Puzzles to do just for fun or to win some great prizes!

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20	17	23	18	6	6	3	6	17	6	24	■	16	23	7
17	■	12	■	2	■	5	■	13	■	16	■	5	■	6
11	22	20	25	6	■	24	13	18	17	18	16	19	24	23
5	■	6	■	14	■	4	■	■	■	24	■	3	■	5
3	19	6	16	3	4	■	24	20	6	22	22	5	23	3
■	■	26	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	6	■	8	■	16
18	5	6	22	24	■	■	■	■	■	■	11	6	19	17
5	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	14
24	20	25	6	■	■	■	■	■	■	17 N	5 I	14 C	25 K	4 Y
3	■	16	■	10	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	20	■	■
7	13	19	23	6	15	13	9	■	23	14	13	3	14	7
18	■	16	■	24	■	■	■	13	■	19	■	22	■	13
16	24	13	19	16	3	5	13	17	■	16	1	16	5	17
4	■	25	■	22	■	14	■	14	■	8	■	23	■	6
23	6	6	■	13	21	6	19	6	9	10	13	23	6	24



A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4 Y	5 I	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14 C	15	16	17 N	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25 K	26

18 7 6 6 22 | 13 11 | 11 13 19 3 20 17 N 6

Each letter of the alphabet has been replaced by a number. The numbers for the first name of our celebrity are given. Work out which number represents which letter in the grid to reveal the TV programme that gave Nicky his break.

Fun-Filled Puzzles For You!

Spot The Difference

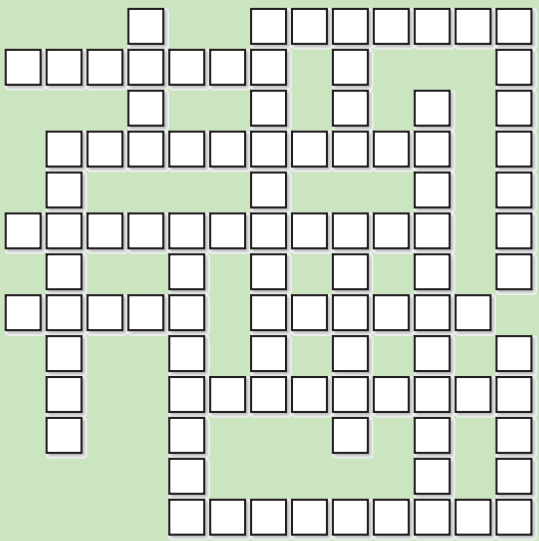
Can you spot the six differences between these two pictures of the Duchess of Cambridge?





Kriss Kross

Try to fit all of the listed words back into the grid.



4 letters
AKIN
TAXI

5 letters
ALTER
STRUT

6 letters
LOITER
UNISEX

7 letters
BOOKISH
CITIZEN
NETWORK

8 letters
CHINLESS
SURROUND

9 letters
DIVERGENT
OVEREXERT

10 letters
CHARTREUSE
CONVERSION

11 letters
ANTECEDENCE
PIPISTRELLE

More puzzles overleaf

Missing Link

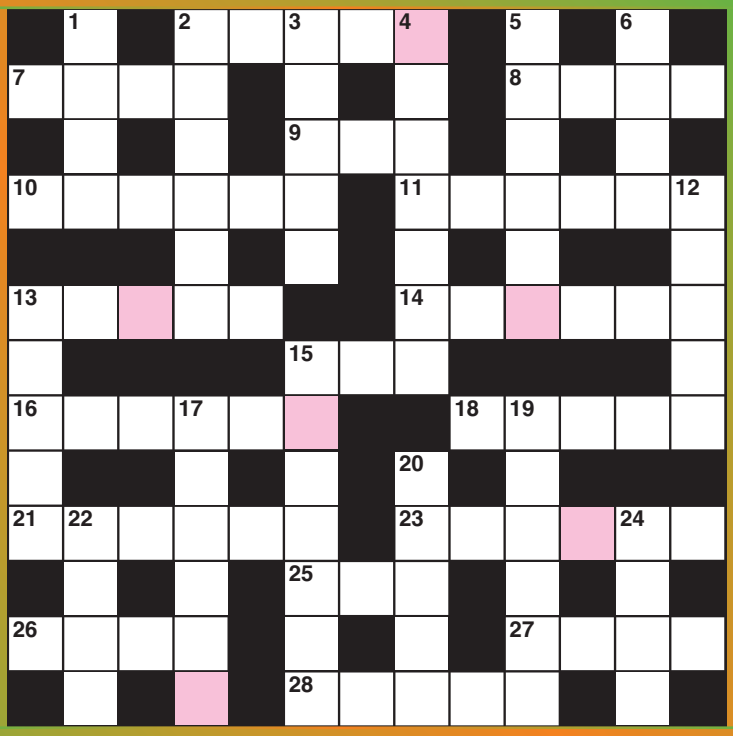
Discover the hidden word in the shaded squares and you can now enter by telephone or text

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The answer to each clue is a word which has a link with each of the three words listed. This word may come at the end (eg HEAD linked with BEACH, BIG, HAMMER), at the beginning (eg BLACK linked with BEAUTY, BOARD and JACK) or a mixture of the two (eg STONE linked with HAIL, LIME and WALL).

No 377



ACROSS

2 Craft, Doctor, Hunt (5)
7 Petit, Poster, Score (4)
8 Duckling, Plug, Sisters (4)
9 Bag, Laughing, Mask (3)
10 Drum, Electric, Fish (6)
11 Bar, Legal, Loin (6)
13 Body, Dog, Mud (5)
14 Comic, Pain, Worker (6)
15 High, Lark, Line (3)
16 Bag, Roll, Water (6)
18 Pine, Tart, Toffee (5)
21 Dance, Deal, Meal (6)
23 Powder, Repellent, Stick (6)
25 Collecting, Foil, Pot (3)
26 Back, Frost, Sound (4)
27 Leader, Road, Tone (4)
28 Comb, Moon, Suckle (5)

DOWN

1 China, Idle, Marrow (4)
2 Ghost, Script, Type (6)
3 Lily, Moth, Paper (5)
4 Ancient, Case, Medical (7)
5 Channel, Railway, Vision (6)
6 Bell, Chip, Navy (4)
12 Air, Automatic, Range (5)
13 Factory, Flood, Sluice (5)
15 Full, Home, Limo (7)
17 Over, Question, Spring (6)
19 Cook, Danish, Puff (6)
20 Basket, Bed, Table (5)
22 Master, Pub, Show (4)
24 Fir, Nose, Traffic (4)

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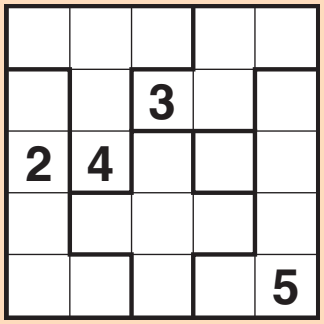
Sudoku

Fill in each of the blank squares with the numbers 1 to 9, so that each row, each column and each 3x3 cell contains all the numbers from 1 to 9.

		1						
			2	8		5		4
2	7					1	3	8
			6	7				5
		8				9		
5				9	8			
4	6	9					5	1
3		7		6	5			
						2		

Suguru

Fill the grid so that each cell in a bold outlined cluster of cells contains the digits 1 and 2, a cluster of 3 cells contains 1, 2 and 3 and so on. No same digit should appear in any neighbouring cell, not even diagonally.



Solutions on page 64

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				GRAND TOTAL	£

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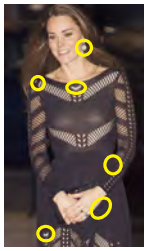
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No Place For Romance

Even in wartime, nothing was going to spoil their moment…

Valentine FICTION

By Alison Carter



The light bulb snapped on and I blinked. Bernie and I had come from a dark February night into a pitch-black barracks, out of pelting rain, so the glare was severe.

"Thought you could sneak back in and get away with it?"

Bernie's Sergeant's voice thundered in my ears.

"I'll explain, sir," Bernie began, but the Sergeant had already crossed the floor and was looking up at Bernie, his face twisted up and his nostrils flaring.

"There's no explanation that'll wash, you sorry excuse for a soldier!" the Sergeant shouted. He turned to me. "What's she doing here?"

"This has nothing to do with you, young lady," barked the Sergeant angrily

He was trying so hard to look threatening, but he was wearing his vest and bed shorts – it was past midnight – and he was much shorter than Bernie. He had to bend his neck back to look confrontational, and it nearly made me giggle. The Sergeant glared.

"It's raining, sir," Bernie said. "I let Daisy come in for a bit, just until –"

"Raining! Raining! We don't turn into delicate petals when wet, Harrison! There's a bloody war on! Pardon my language, Miss," he said automatically, and then I truly couldn't stop myself laughing, and drips shook from my new dress. The Sergeant looked so furious I thought he'd burst.

Bernie said, "It's not Miss, sir. It's Mrs."

The Sergeant's eyes looked as if they were going to pop out of his little bald head. "So, Harrison, not only have you been gallivanting around for two days AWOL while your battalion packs up, but with another man's wife?"

"No, sir," said Bernie.

I was shaking with laughter.

"What do you mean, Private? Speak up."

"She's *my* wife, Sergeant."

He blinked. Then his eyes narrowed.

"Oh, sooooo," he said. "You evaded your duty to get married. Well, Harrison, you'll feel the full force of the army's –"

"The embarkation date changed," I interrupted boldly. I'd had three port and lemons, I admit – it was my wedding day! "We'd planned a perfect Valentine's Day wedding, but then the battalion's leaving date got put forward…"

"This has nothing to do with you, young lady," barked the Sergeant angrily.

"But I'm the wife!" I said, and nearly toppled over in my new shoes, I was trying that hard not to laugh. "This is my wedding dress." I hiccoughed. "Have you got one, sir?"

"A wedding dress?" The Sergeant's voice was squeaky with anger.

"A wife," I said.

He coughed. "This is not the time to discuss my family."

"I bet she's lovely," I said, smiling. "D'you think of her, back home?"

The Sergeant's shiny head nodded.

"The Sergeant comes from the East End," Bernie said softly.

"Within sound," the Sergeant said gruffly, "of the bells."

"She's a local girl?"

His brow grew smoother.

"Born two streets away."

"That's nice," I said. "Married long?"

"Ten years come Saturday," he said, then coughed. "I don't quite see how my marriage… Look, Harrison, this is dereliction of duty, it's –"

"Bernie's ready to go," I put in, "his pals have packed his kit."

"So that 'orrible rabble are in on this?" he snorted.

"Did she wear white, your er…?" I smiled sweetly.

"Mildred." He nodded.

His face was pink, and I could tell that his mind was wandering to some romantic memory.

Just then Bernie's big soggy boot made a squelching sound, and the Sergeant snapped out of his dream.

"We'll 'ave you escorted back to town. And you, Harrison," the nostrils flared again, "will have work to do."

"Will you report my husband?" I asked, fluttering my eyelashes. "Or will you be understanding, it being nearly Valentine's Day?"

He scowled. "Alright!" He grunted, "since you've got yourself ruddy married." Then, almost as an afterthought, he faced Bernie, and barked, "Just don't let it happen again!"

He didn't understand why we laughed so much.

THE AUTHOR SAYS…

"It was a picture a friend showed me of her grandparents' wartime wedding that sparked this story. They looked badly dressed, in a rush, and really happy!"

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Fancy That!

Facts to make you go "**Wow**" on Valentine's Day!



Sweethearts are the American equivalent of Love Hearts



A black rose is not actually black but a very dark red

◆ **Oxytocin is a natural painkiller released during cuddling.**

◆ A wedding shower was originally a way for a bride to pay for her wedding if her parents disapproved of the marriage.

◆ Falling in love fills the brain with euphoria-inducing chemicals including vasopressin, adrenaline and dopamine.

◆ The Matching Hypothesis says that people are most attracted to people who share the same level of attractiveness as themselves.



◆ **The Queen of Hearts in a deck of cards represents the Biblical character Judith.**

◆ **The pressure in a champagne bottle is three times that of a car tyre – and a popped cork can reach 40mph.**



◆ **According to folklore if you count 13 stars for 13 nights, you will dream of the man you are going to marry.**

◆ The necklace in *Pretty Woman* was worth £250,000 and a security guard stood next to the director during filming.

Male mice sing ultrasonic love songs to woo females



◆ **Romantic love is estimated to last only a year, when it's replaced by committed love.**

◆ **It takes only 4 minutes to decide whether you like someone.**

◆ When lovers gaze into each other's eyes for three minutes, their heartbeats synchronise.

◆ **It's said that if a girl steals a man's hat band and wears it as a garter he will fall in love with her.**

◆ Women blink 19 times per minute whereas men blink just 11 times per minute.

◆ Bridegrooms beware! Ecclesiaphobia is a fear of churches.

◆ The rose is the official state flower of New York.

◆ **There is a street called Lover's Lane in Ludham near Great Yarmouth, and another in Newark-on-Trent.**

◆ The largest bottle size for champagne is a Melchizedek – equal to 40 standard bottles or 30 litres.

◆ **The scientific name for the tree that chocolate comes from, Theobroma cacao, means "food of the gods".**

◆ The symbol for the male gender is also the celestial symbol for Mars, Roman god of war. The female symbol is the celestial symbol of Venus, the goddess of love and beauty.



◆ **It's said that if you sit down for dinner and find two forks at your place setting, youll soon marry.**

◆ Marilyn Monroe's IQ score was 163 – 3 points higher than Einstein's.

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